Civil disobedience in Groton

COMMONWEAL

$2.00 October 22, 1993

More moral matters:
DAVID R. CARLIN, Jr.
DENNIS O'BRIEN

Medical matters:
WILLIAM F. MAY on Daniel Callahan

MADELINE MARGET on Melvin Konner

Art:
LEE SIEGEL on the Met's new galleries

Screen:
RICHARD ALLEVA on 'True Romance'

POPE JOHN PAUL II'S

VERITATIS SPLENDOR

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM
JOSEPH A. KOMONCHAK
DENNIS M. DOYLE
CHARLES E. CURRAN
JANET E. SMITH
LISA SOWLE CAHILL
STANLEY HAUERWAS
ANNE E. PATRICK
THE EDITORS

St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthagena, Ohio

AN OFFER THEY COULDN'T REFUSE

How the Apostles became fishers of men (& women)

**********3-DIGIT 458
CW 00079972 9322
ST CHARLES LIBRARY
ST CHARLES SEMINARY
2860 IDSEN 127
CARTHAGENA OH 45822-9999

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Missa Latina en Anglais

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: I don't know why Jim Bowman is so impressed with the Latin Masses he recently witnessed ["Missa Latina, Yes," October 8). I've seen many Latin Masses in the Chicago area, except that they're in English.

LAWRENCE RAGAN

Arians and bishops

Baltimore, Md.

To the Editors: Regarding the letters criticizing Bishop Kenneth Untener's article on the effects of *Humanae vitae* [Correspondence, September 10], may I observe that although Bishop Untener's map analogy may limp somewhat (all analogies limp!), at least he put the emphasis where it should be, on the wholeness of the church, including the *sensus fidelium*.

The letter from Gerald Buckley, O.P., rightly notes that "the *sensus fidelium* is a tricky thing"; but his reference to the Arians seems to show the opposite of what he intends it to show, as Cardinal Newman points out in his famous essay, "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine."

Essentially what Newman said was that in the fourth century, "divine tradition committed to the infallible church was proclaimed and maintained more by the faithful than by the episcopate." Newman reacted rightly against an exaggerated role given to the hierarchy. Vatican II borrowed from Newman the idea that "the body of faithful as a whole cannot err in matters of belief."

In the view of both Newman and the bishops of Vatican II, faith-related decisions are not channeled through a special pipeline from God to the pope, but emerge from the faithful themselves who by the exercise of communal discernment try "to penetrate the faith more deeply by accurate insights and apply it more thoroughly to life." Bishop Untener, in my opinion, is right on target!

WEBSTER T. PATTERSON

The writer is professor emeritus of theology at Loyola College in Maryland.

Good journeys end

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Daniel Callahan's meditation on death ["Cramming for Your Finals," July 16] reinforces a quarrel I have with certain Catholic thinkers. It has been the virtue of Christianity to accept all of life, including death.

To turn away from this wisdom is perverse. I am thinking particularly of Nancy Cruzan here and of Tony Bland in England, both of whom through different kinds of violence were reduced to permanently vegetative states. Some ethicists argue that discontinuing the force-feeding that kept them alive was tantamount to murder. As one commentator phrased it, the feeding did them no harm; in his opinion it was not even medically extraordinary care, and only accidentally invasive.

Anyone who has endured an IV might quibble with the latter point, and Nancy Cruzan's one spontaneous reaction—occasionally to vomit the food the tube ingested into her stomach—suggests that what was left of her was doing more than quibbling.

But what about the notion that such force-feeding does no harm? How do we as Christians deal with the biblical statement that there is a time to live and a time to die?

Jonathan Swift gave his viewpoint in *Gulliver's Travels*. The Struldbruggs, condemned to eternal life on earth, at first seemed blessed to the gullible Gulliver, but he discovers that, like all finite beings, they atrophy, become ultimately brain-dead, but are denied forever the comfort of death—which means as well that they are forever denied entry into the vision of God, which is, for a Christian, the ultimate meaning of life. By compelling our irreversibly brain-dead people to live, we turn them into Struldbruggs. We make Descartes's grotesque definition of a human being as a soul trapped in a body absolutely accurate.

MARION BURKHART

Death without meaning

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: Daniel Callahan writes eloquently in "Cramming for Your Finals." But, in the end, his words will be helpful only to nonbelievers. Without reference to Christ, death remains an absurdity which philosophizing cannot render meaningful.

ROBERT J. MILLER, O.P.

Didymus didn't disappear

Kalamazoo, Mich.

To the Editors: I was pleased to learn from "Who Was Didymus?" [August 13] that W.H. Auden's 1942 columns in *Commonweal* under the pen name, Didymus, are the subject of a forthcoming monograph by Jack Deedy: *Auden as Didymus*. However, it is not the case (as your subhead, "Jack Deedy Solves a Mystery," may imply) that writers on Auden's work have continued to overlook his "Lecture Notes" since 1973 when Edward S. Skillin revealed the identity of Didymus. An essay of mine in *Commonweal* (May 13, 1977), "Auden and W.B.

(Continued on page 30)

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional offices. Copyright © 1993 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $39; Canada, $41; foreign, $44. Special two-year rate: U.S. $67; Canada, $71; foreign, $77. Surcharge for air mail delivery to Europe, North Africa, Central or South America, $35 per year; for other parts of the world, $44 per year. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover, Antonucci; p. 5, Skip Weisenberger, *The Day*; p. 19, Valerry; p. 22, Karin Willis, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; p. 24, Scully, Rothco; p. 25, Mahood, Rothco; p. 27, Ross, Rothco.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXX, Number 18

Correspondence: 2
Editorials: 3
Sub-versive activity: *John Dear* 5
Get me to the church on time: *Jo McGowan* 6
Single-parenthood is okay!: *David R. Carlin, Jr.* 8
There goes the neighborhood: *Abigail McCarthy* 9
'Veritatis splendor': *Lawrence S. Cunningham, Joseph A. Komonchak, Dennis M. Doyle, Charles E. Curran, Janet E. Smith, Lisa Sowle Cahill, Stanley Hauerwas, Anne E. Patrick* 11
An offer they couldn't refuse: *Richard Goodman* 19
Art: *Lee Siegel* 21
Screen: *Richard Alleva* 22

BOOKS

The Troubled Dream of Life: *William F. May* 25
Moral Imagination/Moral Sense: *Dennis O'Brien* 26
Medicine at the Crossroads: *Madeline Marget* 28
The Sixties: *David Castronovo* 26

STAFF

Editor: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Managing Editor: Patrick Jordan
Associate Editor: Paul Baumann
Production Editor: Jacqueline Dowdell
Senior Writer: Robert G. Hoyt
Business Manager: Richard Haas
Design: Emil Antonucci
Screen: Richard Alleva
Stage: Gerald Weales
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Columnists: John Garvey, J. Bryan Hehir, Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr., Sidney Callahan, Liz Leibold McCloskey, Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr.
Staff: Harriette Balsky, Carmen Alava, Pamela Quatse
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, Me. 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 15 Dutch St. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

Veritatis splendor

On first reading *Veritatis splendor*, we were relieved to find that it was addressed to the author's "Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate." Pope John Paul II's latest encyclical, all 179 pages and 40,000 words of it, is tough going, even apart from the obscure prose and the perhaps too careful use of indirect statement. So, who better than the bishops to hunker down, reflect upon, and render considered judgment on what the pope has to say? We await their reflections and their actions.

Still, editorial duty called, requiring a second reading, a third—and a fourth over the most difficult passages. Dare we confess that some were held to the light to see what might be behind them? From our reading, we make the following points.

Some things are clear:

- *Veritatis splendor* neither raises the ante on the ban against artificial contraception nor extends the claims of papal infallibility, as rumors of earlier drafts and recent but premature headlines had seemed to suggest. Nonetheless, the careful reader will detect a subtext dealing with issues of sexual morality that are thought to have precipitated John Paul II's six-year writing effort.
- The pope's opening reflections on the Gospel story of the rich young man (Matt. 19); his Christological emphasis; his call for repentance and a new evangelization; and his profound sense of human solidarity have great moral power.
- The encyclical insists on the existence of objective moral norms founded in natural law and accessible to human reason in making moral judgments. In this, the pope rejects relativism, consequentialism, and individualism.

Veritatis splendor, though in some respects a very "churchy" document, speaks to many of the world's problems:

- Many—Catholics and non-Catholics alike—will find the pope's insistence a bracing reminder of what is essential in determining and pursuing the common good, whether in the tribal village or the global village—and now more so than ever in the post-cold war world. Such an understanding was once the common view in the West and it had its counterparts in other world religions and philosophical systems. Indeed, general formulations prohibiting murder, theft, lying, adultery, etc., are the moral rules by which millions of people around the world still live—certainly in principle and often in practice—though the prohibited behaviors are not necessarily subsumed under the rubric of intrinsically immoral acts.
- In this country and elsewhere—Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti, Cambodia, South Africa, the Amazon—there is a high level of physical, verbal, economic, psychological, and political violence as well as personal and social corruption. These reflect a decline in moral standards and point to the slackening of efforts toward socialization

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and of social pressures that invite the willing compliance of both children and adults to a moral code. The all-too-common, "I am free to do as I please (at least in the matter at hand)," expresses a kind of moral agnosticism that can only end in wrecking the lives of individuals, undermining communities, and corroding human solidarity.

- The world's woes and travesties cannot be far from the pope's mind or memory when he writes to the bishops: "Each of us can see the seriousness of what is involved, not only for individuals but also for the whole of society, with the reaffirmation of the universality and immutability of the moral commandments, particularly those which prohibit always and without exception intrinsically evil acts" (115).

The principal focus is on the Catholic moral tradition:

- The pope's concern to point to the universality of natural law notwithstanding, he focuses his scrutiny most sharply on Catholic moral teaching. There are, he writes, "trends of theological thinking and certain philosophical affirmations that are incompatible with revealed truth" (29). And he wishes "to draw attention to those elements of the church's teaching which today appear particularly exposed to error, ambiguity, or neglect" (30).
- The errors include: making freedom an absolute; according conscience the status of a supreme tribunal; granting reason complete sovereignty; making a sharp distinction between the ethical order and the order of salvation; pitting law against freedom; dividing the unity of the person; denying the universality and immutability of natural law; elevating a "fundamental option for the good" above concrete moral choices; denying a distinction between mortal and venial sins.

For all of its strengths, there are real difficulties with the encyclical's analysis and its message:

- As the pope's reflections and argumentation proceed through chapters 2 and 3, the supporting analysis often seems obscure and convoluted. The erroneous views that are ascribed to revisionist moral theologians are presented in extreme forms, forms to which few if any "dissenters" among Catholic philosophers and theologians would subscribe. In contrast, the pope puts forth Catholic moral norms and methods in formulations so general that even the "dissenters" would find them unexceptionable. At the same time, this treatment avoids the hard cases that brought forth forms of ethical reasoning (such as proportionalism and the "fundamental option") in the first place. For example, this pope (and the American Catholic bishops) condemned any use of nuclear weapons in war, yet gave moral sanction to the building, stocking, and aiming of these weapons for the sake of deterrence. A tricky call—and one that, in some interpretations, relied on a form of proportionalism. So also with developing views on ectopic pregnancies and the withdrawal of life support systems. The painful dilemmas presented by specific cases cannot be so easily evaded, nor can the real ambiguities in Scripture and tradition. The actual practices of the church in past centuries also cannot be ignored (the toleration, if not approval, of slavery and torture springs to mind).
- Yes, there are bad ideas loose in the Catholic church. But the encyclical's effort to ascribe those bad ideas to Catholic moral theologians and then call on them to demonstrate loyal assent, *internal* as well as external, to "authentic" teaching does little to resolve the problem. This approach fails to understand the underlying tensions involved in conveying authoritative teachings to educated and critically reflective Catholics who require information, persuasion, and a sense of firm and intelligent conviction in those who teach. Instead, the encyclical and its catalogue of errors looks to become the mechanism for the purging from seminaries and perhaps other Catholic institutions of all but rote proclaimers of the moral law.
- In reading and thinking about *Veritatis splendor*, we could not help recalling other documents and other events of the past several years. We thought, for example, of instructions and letters discussing the ecclesial responsibility of theologians; the oath of fidelity; Catholic higher education and its pending ordinances; as well as the long-promised English translation of the catechism. In addition, there is the centralizing and authoritarian style of Rome. These include the non-collegial selection of bishops; the manipulation of several universal synods, their agendas, and outcomes; the unilateral establishment of an organization for U.S. women religious parallel to the long-established Leadership Conference of Women Religious; the refusal to reconsider mandatory celibacy, even while re-ordaining married priests from the Episcopal church; and the ban on even *discussing* the ordination of women.
- All of these, and *Veritatis splendor* in their wake, seem to be part of a strategy to raise up a defensive perimeter that, rather than marking necessary boundaries, will end in eroding the credibility of church officers and diminishing the vitality of Catholic institutions.
- In his closing pages, the pope writes, "Martyrdom, accepted as an affirmation of the inviolability of the moral order, bears splendid witness both to the holiness of God's law and to the inviolability of the personal dignity of man." This is true. But two points. First, people can sacrifice their lives unnecessarily or give them up in bad causes. It is dangerous to take the fact of persecution as confirmation of being right. Moral absolutes may demand martyrdom, but martyrdom does not necessarily demonstrate moral absolutes. Second, martyrdom, when it comes, must be freely chosen. It should not be sought out. It should not be imposed or induced. It is a gift of God and not a tool of church order. The pope's overall point is well founded in history and in any true understanding of Jesus' mission; John Paul's enthusiasm may reveal a great deal about his experience and his spirituality. But we fear it is an enthusiasm that is contagious and fatal, not for those who freely and appropriately embrace it, but for those who become the targets of hectoring, and less holy, enthusiasts: those who are willing not to be martyrs but to make martyrs (metaphorically, at least) of any who do not fall in line.

And in conclusion:

We have no sharp conclusions. Our anxieties about *Veritatis splendor* are real, but perhaps misplaced. Time will tell. Calls in Rome and in this country for dialogue between bishops and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

theologians as the encyclical was being officially issued are to be welcomed. We think that the eight women and men, whom we invited to comment in this issue, contribute a great deal to opening that dialogue. Their reflections begin on page 11.

ET CETERA

PLANNED FALSEHOODS The theologians and church historians at Planned Parenthood Federation of America greeted Pope John Paul II's new encyclical with the organization's customary intellectual and moral generosity. A press release issued by the federation's president, Pamela J. Maraldo, who is identified as "a practicing Roman Catholic," denounced the encyclical by citing statistics on the use of birth control and abortion not only in the United States but in Italy ("the pope's very own back yard"). Maraldo concluded by warning of "the vast schism that already threatens to permanently divide and destroy Catholicism."

Maraldo's bold summary of the pope's 40,000 word philosophical treatise judged it "an insidious attack on sexual behavior in general." We missed this insidious intent in our reading of *Veritatis splendor*. But perhaps this is understandable, for, as Planned Parenthood admits, "the new encyclical devotes only one paragraph (out of 200 pages) to condemning various sexual acts."

At least Planned Parenthood tried to count the pages before issuing its irreformable decree.

REPORT FROM GROTON

SUB-VERSIVE ACTIVITY

TIP THE CANOE & TRIDENT, TOO

First, you have to find an unobtrusive, secluded entry point to lower the canoe into the Thames River. Mind you, a few hundred yards down river at the Electric Boat nuclear submarine factory in Groton, Connecticut, police and security guards have peeled their eyes on the lookout for any peace people such as ourselves who might seek to disrupt the ceremonies launching the fifteenth Trident submarine, the *U.S.S. Rhode Island*, the deadliest weapon ever created in the history of the world.

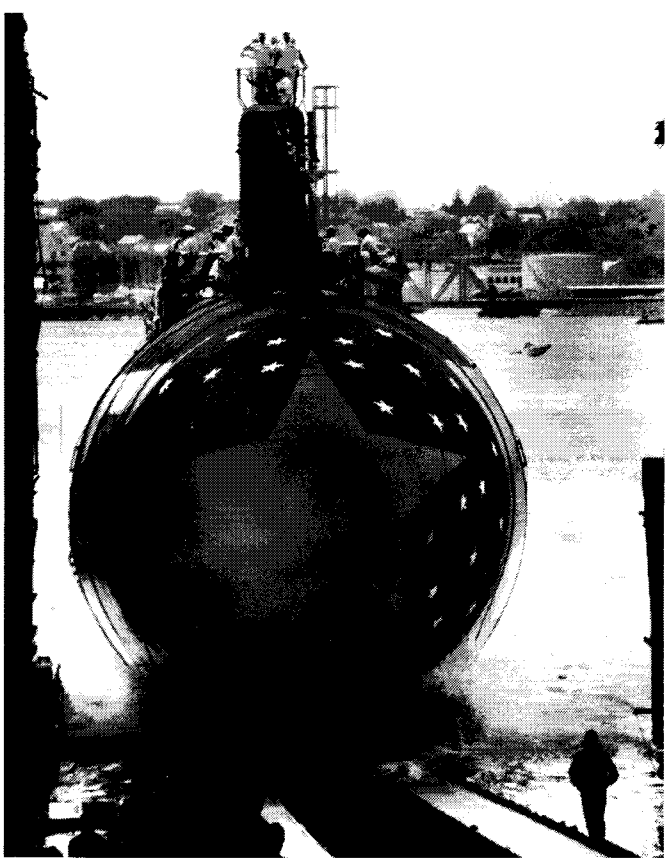
You are careful not to attract attention. Despite your best efforts, you and your friends are spotted by a woman in the neighborhood who immediately alerts the police about your suspicious activities with the canoe. But before the police boat pulls ashore, you and your friends have removed the canoe and are walking quickly, nonchalantly, down a side street with the canoe under your arms, looking much like the Marx Brothers or the Three Stooges.

Five blocks down, you find a secluded niche between two houses where you set the canoe in the water. Wearing life vests and armed with a huge banner ("Trident Is a Crime; Swords into Plowshares") as well as a roofing hammer (in case, by the grace of God, you are able to reach the Trident sub itself, whereupon you can begin again the much needed process of disarmament and dismantling), you and your friends take off down the river.

The sky overhead shines a clear, bright blue. A cool breeze blows and the Thames River sparkles. Across the river stands the military town of New London, Connecticut. You are now leaving Groton, where 202 nuclear and military submarines have been built over the last decades. Police and Coast Guard boats cruise the river so that the launching ceremonies, attended by thousands of military guests, can proceed undisturbed. Two friends paddle, while you and another friend are assigned the simple task of unfurling the banner at the appropriate moment and holding it aloft.

Meanwhile, seventeen other peace-activist friends by now are entering the Electric Boat complex to attend the ceremonies with the general public. They enter in pairs, walk down the narrow entrance way, when they suddenly kneel down and begin speaking out against the Trident, thus preventing the crowds from entering. After five minutes, one pair is arrested and escorted to a waiting van, the public starts to file in for the ceremonies again, and another pair kneels down to call a halt to the proceedings. So it goes.

The current is fast and you are clipping along now. You dis-



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

regard the police boats that have suddenly flashed their lights and are heading straight for you. For a moment you are concerned about the choppy waves, especially the large wakes from other boats that occasionally whiz on by. You do not want to capsize. Your goal: to paddle into the waters directly off the Trident submarine dock (a huge area marked off by buoys and filled with security boats) and perhaps even to climb onto the dock to witness to the peace of Christ. The sun is hot and you can hear a military band playing. In a matter of minutes, with the help of a strong current, you and your confreres are one hundred yards from the Trident dock. The absurdity of the situation hits you full force.

Not the absurdity of paddling a canoe down the Thames River to the Trident sub dock. Not the absurdity of friends blockading the entrance to a military ceremony. No. The full-scale, humongous absurdity, insanity, lunacy of the Trident submarine itself.

There it stands, right in front of you, decked out in flags. The *U.S.S. Rhode Island* is lowered almost into the water in a special dock, and covered with white tents where the ceremonies are taking place. But right next to it, completely out of the water, aimed straight at you like one giant terrorist bomb is the *U.S.S. Maine*, set to be launched in a matter of months.

The seeing is believing. There, on the shoreline in front of you are two submarines; each the equivalent of 4,000 Hiroshima explosions; each designed for a first-strike nuclear attack; each built at the cost of $2.2 billion, money that should have been spent instead on real human needs. The cold war is supposedly over; the Soviet Union has withered away, but still, we maintain and even launch new Tridents.

A Coast Guard ship approaches. "Fellows, there are too many of you in that small canoe and so we're going to have to escort you back to shore." "No, sir, officer," you reply with a smile. "We're fine." "Come on, we know who you are and what you're about," he announces, as his boat rubs against your flimsy canoe and you hold on, trying not to capsize. "We're escorting you back now."

With three boats safely at your side, your canoe mates manage to circle around, heading back down the river. But the police and Coast Guard ships have inadvertently brought you around closer to the Trident dock.

Ever obedient, you obey. Then, as you pass a hundred yards right in front of the Trident, you turn and start to paddle right toward the ceremony. You unfurl the banner. On the dock, a crowd has gathered to watch the spectacle. The police boat is suddenly on top of you and a voice declares, "OK, fellas, that's enough. You're going to have to come with us." But the close connection between the boat and the canoe, the choppy waters and the policemen's hands reaching into the canoe, throw off your balance. One friend jumps into the water, the canoe starts sinking, and the next thing you know, you're in the water!

"Swim to the back of the boat and we'll pull you on board,"

Get me to the church on time

By the time I was twenty, I had been arrested six times. My offenses ranged from disorderly conduct and trespass to unlawful obstruction of an entrance, and, to be honest, I was proud of every one of them. I was a peace movement activist and I had been arrested protesting nuclear power, nuclear weapons, and abortion.

As a young, single woman with no family responsibilities, my previous arrests had caused no real problems. I actually enjoyed spending time in jail as it gave me a chance to catch up on my reading and writing. Since I fasted whenever I was in, I didn't even mind the awful food. My employer was sympathetic to my views and always gave me time off when I needed it, so I didn't have to worry about my job either. But in 1979, the year I turned twenty-one, I took on more than I could manage.

That year, at the Electric Boat facility in Groton, Connecticut, a new Trident submarine was completed and about to be launched. The ceremony, to which thousands of EB employees and their families were invited, was attended by naval dignitaries and top Washington officials.

Out on the street, in front of the shipyard, a large demonstration was held, in which I took part. Only a small percentage of the demonstrators planned to commit civil disobedience, and originally, I had no thought of joining them. I was getting married just one month later and I was so distracted and excited I couldn't concentrate on anything serious.

But somehow as I stood there holding my sign and watching the crowds lining up at the gate to file in and give their blessing to this ship that could cause the death of millions of people, I knew I had to do something. I handed my sign to a friend and quickly slipped into the group that was planning to block the entrance to the docks. I had no time to change my mind, either, for at that moment our leader signaled us to move forward and sit down. Just as we did, the gates opened for the crowds to walk in.

There was mass confusion for a few moments as the ticket-holders clambered over us to get into the shipyard and security guards ran in every direction trying to restore order. Finally the crowds were held back while the police cleared a path through our group. To accomplish this, of course, we had to be removed, and I was one of the first arrested. The ceremonies were delayed by over an hour while we were dragged to the waiting buses and in all the emotion and excitement, I never gave a thought to the consequences of my action.

We were arraigned a few hours later in the New London

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

one officer says. You turn and see the Trident. In a flash, all those swimming lessons from summer camp return to mind and you're off. You head straight for the Trident. Two other friends have begun swimming, too. The police boats circle about, unsure about all these swimmers. One friend remains with the canoe and eventually loads it onto the police boat.

The water, though polluted, is cool and refreshing. As you swim, you stop occasionally and speak out in a loud voice, not only to the dumbfounded Coast Guard crews in the distance but to the crowds of military officers, Electric Boat workers and their families standing along the dock next to the Trident. "I am a Jesuit, a Catholic priest, and I work with the homeless poor. The Trident is a sin, a crime against God and humanity. This death machine robs the poor of the world. The billions spent on this submarine should be spent on housing, food, health care, and education for the poor. My brothers and sisters, Trident is not something to celebrate. It is Auschwitz. It threatens to destroy the planet. For God's sake, dismantle it."

Suddenly, a specially equipped rubber police raft speeds across the river in a flash and fishes you out of the water. "Officers, we mean you no harm," you say. "It's just that we have to speak out against this death machine." "We understand," they reply. "We respect you but we have to take you in."

Soaking wet, you arrive with your friends at the Groton City Jail. You are photographed, questioned, processed, and escorted into a crowded jail cell, where you find seventeen others awaiting you, applauding your action. As you settle down for a day in jail, the group explodes into song.

"Paul and Silas bound in jail, had no money to pay their bail.
Keep your eyes on the prize. Hold on.
The only thing that we did wrong was stay in the wilderness too long.
Keep your eyes on the prize. Hold on.
The only thing that we did right was to organize for life.
Keep your eyes on the prize. Hold on.
The only Trident we can stand is the sugarless chewing brand.
Keep your eyes on the prize. Hold on."

Eventually, you are released and told to appear in court weeks later. The police officer smiles at you and says, "You know, we respect you and admire you for staying at this for so long, but you should know, we think you all are crazy." You return the smile and offer a blessing.

This is not the first time you have been called crazy. You think of Saint Paul, encouraging you to be a fool for Christ. In a world which constructs and launches Trident submarines, what harm is there, being mocked for speaking out against death and for life? God is blessing you. You leave the jail, smiling.

JOHN DEAR

John Dear, S.J., is a peace activist who works with the homeless in Washington, D.C. He is the author of Seeds of Nonviolence *(Fortkamp).*

District Courthouse, and as the judge read out the trial date, my heart sank. On May 9, I was to appear in court; on May 13, I was to get married.

As this was my third arrest at Electric Boat, I was certain the sentence would be a stiff one. First-time offenders often got off with a warning, but "repeaters" like me usually landed in jail, sometimes for months.

What could I do? It was already mid-April and the invitations had all been sent. All the arrangements were made and my fiancé's parents, who were from India, had taken time off from work for the month of May and had made their flight reservations. I couldn't possibly postpone the wedding.

I thought fleetingly of approaching the prosecutor and asking for a postponement of the trial, but one look at his face dissuaded me. Harold Deen was a good man and probably a fine grandfather, but he did *not* approve of political demonstrators. I watched him gathering up his files and muttering about those "confounded peaceniks" and I knew I didn't stand a chance.

"Who asked you to be arrested?" he would say. "You could have stood there with your sign until doomsday and no one would have bothered you—this is a free country. But no, you had to get in people's way, block an entrance, engage in disorderly conduct...."

And of course, he would be right. How could I have forgotten about my *wedding*? That evening, I sat in my room at home, staring sadly at my white gown, wondering how on earth I was going to tell my fiancé that I would be in jail on our wedding day.

I waited for nearly a week, hoping, I suppose, that some miracle would occur, before breaking the news to him. I was astonished by his calm response (of course, I was twenty-one and he was thirty-three): "Why don't you just call the prosecutor and explain?" he asked.

"Explain!" I shouted. "How can I explain that I forgot my own wedding date?"

"Don't worry," he reassured me, "I'm sure he's heard crazier things. People get postponements all the time for less important reasons. Remember, disorderly conduct is a misdemeanor. And, anyway, it can't hurt to try, can it?"

Finally, I decided he was right. There was nothing to lose. Nervously, I dialed the number and waited while a secretary put my call through to the assistant district attorney. As quickly as possible, I told him my story and was surprised to hear him chuckle. "Just a minute," he said, and put me on hold.

After what seemed an endless wait, he came back on the line. "Jo," he said, "the state of Connecticut would like to give you a wedding gift. We'll see that the charges are dismissed."

JO MCGOWAN

Jo McGowan, a frequent Commonweal *contributor, lives in India.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

SINGLE-PARENTHOOD IS OKAY!

AND EXPERIENCE SAYS THE EARTH IS FLAT

One evening early in August of this year, having survived another difficult summer day (it's not the heat, it's the humidity), I turned the TV on at about midnight and discovered that PBS's Charlie Rose had John Leo as one of his guests. Leo, formerly of *Commonweal* and now a columnist for *U.S. News and World Report,* was a member of a four-person panel discussing the evils and/or merits of single-parenthood in America.

Leo and the other male member of the panel were decidedly of the opinion that the fatherless-child phenomenon was a great social evil. The other two members of the panel, both women, disagreed. One of them, Katha Pollitt, an editor at the *Nation*, felt that the correlation between single-parenthood and a wide range of social pathologies—crime, violence, drugs, failure in school, poverty, etc.—was not a causal connection. She speculated that if we did a study while controlling for other possible causes, the effect of fatherlessness would fade to virtually nothing. The other woman, who is now thirty-nine years old, deliberately had a child out of wedlock at about the age of thirty-five, and has written a book about her experience.

What was interesting about the TV panel discussion was not so much the points that were being made as the fact that it was taking place at all. What, I wondered, will be a debatable issue next? Will I turn on Charlie Rose next week and find that he has a panel discussing whether the earth is flat or round? Will some flat-earther (preferably from the *Nation*) explain that the evidence for the roundness of the earth is worthless because our observations were not controlled by parallel observations of some admittedly flat planet? And will someone who has sailed around the world single-handedly, and then written a book about the experience, argue that the ocean sure did look pretty flat during his or her voyage?

By this late date it is difficult to see how anyone who has not been in a Rip Van Winkle coma for the last twenty years can doubt that the fatherless-child epidemic has been a gigantic social disaster. Yet there are people—intelligent, well-educated, glib (often very glib indeed)—who not only doubt it, they positively deny it. The reasons they give are interesting:

1. "Many children have grown up in single-parent households and have turned out very well." Yes, and many people have smoked cigarettes for thirty years without getting lung cancer. No matter: smoking still increases the risk of lung cancer, and single-parenthood still increases the risk of misfortune for children.

2. "This is a classic case of blaming the victim—blaming women who often act heroically in very difficult circumstances."

Several more minds

With our October 8, 1993, issue, Sidney Callahan joined our roster of columnists, whose writings appear under the rubric "Of Several Minds." She is well known to readers of this magazine. Ms. Callahan is professor of psychology at Mercy College, a licensed psychologist in New York, and the author of many books, most recently *Parents Forever* (Crossroad) and *In Good Conscience* (HarperSanFrancisco).

Liz Liebold McCloskey, who joined us over the summer, has a degree in social ethics from Yale Divinity School. In 1989, while working at the Sex Crimes Unit in the Manhattan District Attorney's office, she served as an intern at *Commonweal*. She now lives in Arlington, Virginia, with her husband, Peter, and their two sons, Brian and Collin. She has served on the staff of Senator John Danforth (1989-92), and is now a research assistant for the National Advisory Board on Ethics in Reproduction. And only twenty-nine years old!

Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr., who will begin his stint with our issue dated November 5, is dean of the Valparaiso University School of Law. He has reviewed books for us, as well as written on topics as varied as constitutionalism in Russia and the Branch Davidians in Texas.

These three join our regular panel of pundits: Abigail McCarthy, novelist, lecturer, and commentator, who resides in Washington, D.C.; John Garvey, long of Springfield, Illinois, now happily ensconced in New York, where, as he wrote in his October 8 column, he serves as pastor to an Orthodox community; and David R. Carlin, Jr., who after a stint in Rhode Island's state legislature and a run for the U.S. House of Representatives has returned to teaching at Rhode Island Community College. Readers will also be familiar with his separate column in our Correspondence section titled: "The Author Replies." Finally, J. Bryan Hehir, who also has several minds but who writes under the rubric "World Watch," continues his observations of the world scene from Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he serves as pastor of Saint Paul's Parish and is a member of the faculty at both the Harvard Divinity School and the Harvard Center for International Affairs.

We are confident that our readers will be able to pick a fight—a friendly fight—with at least one of these misguided people.

THE EDITORS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But to the degree that parents get blamed, the lion's share of the blame is assigned to males who have walked out on their parental responsibilities. More importantly, most critics are not interested in assigning blame to individuals. Instead they blame a contemporary culture that has made unlimited personal freedom the *summum bonum* of human life.

3. "The critics are conservative males who are distressed to see women rising in the world. They want to put women 'back in their place.'" Yet it is difficult to think of anything, including male prejudice, that has so retarded the progress of women in recent times, especially their economic progress, as the burden of single-parenthood.

In other words, the arguments offered by those who disagree with critics of the John Leo school are devoid of intellectual respectability. So why do apparently intelligent people keep giving these reasons?

The smoking analogy provides a clue. We understand why some people refuse to acknowledge the evidence that smoking increases the risk of lung cancer. For tobacco companies, it's a question of income. For smokers, it's a question of a bad habit they've grown to love. In other words, interests have a tendency to blind people to facts.

So what interest is blinding people to the fact that the single-parenthood epidemic has been a social disaster?

Some people (especially males) don't want to hear about it because this will call upon them to change their lives, to adopt habits of responsibility, including sexual responsibility, where they would prefer a more happy-go-lucky style of life.

Others (especially women) don't want to hear about it because they find themselves in the single-parenthood situation, raising children with minimal or zero assistance from fathers. And no matter how often the critics say, "Don't worry, Ms. Jones, we're not blaming you, we're blaming the culture," they can't help but feel guilty.

But the intellectual defenders of single-parenthood (who might also be called The Apologists for Murphy Brown) have yet another motive: the ideological motive. The pivotal ethical doctrine of this ideology is the one mentioned above, namely, that the *summum bonum* of human life (or at least of human life in America in the late twentieth century) is virtually unlimited personal freedom.

From this single axiom are deduced a number of doctrines. Heading the list is this: (1) the good society is the society whose only common good is the agreement not to agree on any common good. But this is followed by others: (2) cultural diversity is to be prized regardless of the content of the culture; (3) the sexual liberation movement is a great step forward in the advance of civilization; (4) the right to abortion is a fundamental human right; (5) the right to suicide is another fundamental human right; and of course (6) regardless of whether or not there are children involved, society has no business pressuring people to get married or remain married.

These doctrines and others are all part of an ideological package. Attack any one of them, and you have attacked the supreme axiom upon which they are all based; but attack the central axiom, and you have attacked all the other doctrines that are derived from it. An attack on any doctrine, then, is an attack on the whole system. It's like the three musketeers: one for all, and all for one. Or it's like the traditional notion of the unity of Catholic doctrine: attack one doctrine, and you have attacked the church's teaching authority; hence you have indirectly attacked all church doctrine.

At all events, subscribers to this ideology cannot afford to yield on a single point of doctrine, no matter how illogical or contrary to fact. This is why John Leo is as likely to persuade Katha Pollitt to change her mind as is the A.S.P.C.A. to persuade adherents of the Santaria faith to renounce the sacrifice of chickens.

Mention of the Santaria reminds us that religion always involves sacrifice. Some religions sacrifice chickens. Others sacrifice contrite hearts. The secular religion of the cultural Left sacrifices the prosperity and happiness of millions of children. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

THE CHURCHES DISTURB THE PEACE

If the mark of the truly faithful is to endure persecution, the churches of the Washington, D.C., area must be doing something right. A recent *Washington Post* (September 18, 1993) report by Kirstin Downey Grimsley lists church after church harassed by the neighbors and the communities in which they minister. Neighborhood activists are feuding with the churches, she says, over plans to build, to expand, or to add new forms of ministry. And zoning regulations are the weapons of choice.

The report listed difficulties experienced by churches in almost all of the Maryland and Virginia suburban counties surrounding Washington and in the District itself. Some of these, it must be admitted, were what the residents in old neighborhoods might consider exotic and alien congregations: a mosque in Virginia's Fairfax County, Jehovah's Witnesses in Maryland's Prince George's County, a Buddhist group in an up-scale area of Washington. In these cases the opposition might be based as much on suspicion and dislike of "the different" as on the ministries proposed or the buildings to be built.

But opposition has flared up, as well, against more established and mainline religious groups: a Presbyterian church seeking to relocate in an area near the State Department, a Jewish congregation planning to build a school in Fairfax, Virginia, Catholics building a "too-tall" rectory in Alexandria, Virginia.

"Some don't like the bells. Some don't like the steeples," writes Grimsley, "and some don't like the singing, which one successful church opponent called 'noise pollution.'" But the real problem seems to be that the churches these days

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are offering social services which seek to shore up or to supplement the foundering and overwhelmed government social service agencies.

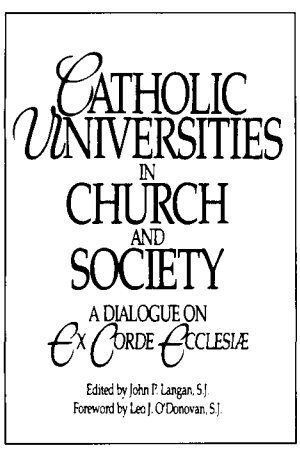
Traditionally Catholic churches have built parochial schools on their property—often the school before the church—and all the school-related activities like sports, games, club meetings were an accepted part of the school's presence in the community. Protestant churches and Jewish temples were the meeting places for youth groups, women's groups, men's groups, etc. These may have brought occasional complaints but not the kind of attack the churches face today.

Now Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups meet in the churches as do support groups for the mentally ill recently released from treatment. There are classes for retarded children and adults. There are day-care centers for children and the senior citizens, including the frail elderly and those with Alzheimer's disease. Some churches run soup kitchens and shelters for the homeless. A church once alive only on Sundays and special feast days may now be abuzz with activities all week long. The concomitant traffic and parking problems, plus an increased noise level, can well seem disruptive in a hitherto quiet area.

In an urban area plagued by drive-by shootings, car-jacking, kidnapping, violent theft, and mugging it is not entirely unreasonable for residents of a neighborhood to be disturbed by an influx of strangers, many with troubled histories. Some church groups whose congregations largely have homes elsewhere have instituted uses of their church property with little regard for the feelings of the people left in the neighborhood. This is especially true of the members of large inner-city churches who have fled to the suburbs to live and return only to worship and volunteer in the church projects. Others, as Grimsley points out, have permitted "activities on their property that are clearly outside any liturgical or charitable function." She cites a church with a missionary training academy that housed an elephant and two leopards on the grounds! Nearby residents may also question the trendy youth leaders who offer their institutions for rock and rap concerts, no matter how effective such gatherings may be in drawing in the young.

Nevertheless, participation in good works is part and parcel of church life. In the Protestant churches it has its roots in the missionary and Social Gospel movements of the nineteenth century. In Catholic churches outreach of this kind only tended to become a regular part of parish life in the aftermath of Vatican II, largely because our charity was compartmentalized. We tended to express it by supporting religious orders or organizations founded to take care of the poor, the sick, the old, the abandoned or orphaned in specific ways. But charity was always and is at the heart of religion. The virtue behind the current controversy is the acknowledgment by the contemporary church member that he or she is personally responsible for doing good unto others, especially those in most need. It is also the acknowledgment of the church and the local congregation that its responsibility to the community is as great as its responsibility to its members. A Methodist pastor in Houston, the Reverend Kirbyjon Caldwell, is quoted in another report (*Washington Post*, September 21) as putting the reason for this very succinctly, "The community is only as strong as the church's presence in the community."

How to persuade the community of this? There may always be the "insensitivity, self-centeredness, greed,...racism, and classism," of which Caldwell also speaks. But churches can also reach out to their critics and be sensitive to their problems. Many in the Washington area, in an ecumenical spirit, do reach out and are aware of their neighbors' feelings. They do such simple, peaceable things as building parking lots on their own properties to reduce congestion. They join with neighboring churches of different faiths to invite the community to liturgical celebrations to reassure them that worship is a priority. They adopt inner-city parishes and send volunteers to help the troubled where they are rather than importing them. They try to share with the community their concern for the weak and helpless they care for and invite its help. Above all, they give the example of love and try not to judge their persecutors. □



Catholic Universities in Church and Society

A Dialogue on *Ex corde Ecclesiae*

Edited by John P. Langan, S.J.
Foreword by Leo J. O'Donovan, S.J.

In this volume, distinguished scholars and legal experts define the key questions and explore the future implications for American Catholic colleges and universities of *Ex corde Ecclesiae,* the Roman Catholic Church's first significant legislative enactment on the nature and role of the Catholic university. Of interest to everyone concerned with the future of Catholic higher education.
ISBN 0-87840-544-5 / 272 pp. / $14.95

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY PRESS
P.O. BOX 4866, HAMPDEN STATION, BALTIMORE, MD 21211-4866
PHONE: 410-516-6995. FAX: 410-516-6998

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VERITATIS SPLENDOR

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM ● JOSEPH A. KOMONCHAK
DENNIS M. DOYLE ● CHARLES E. CURRAN ● JANET E. SMITH
LISA SOWLE CAHILL ● STANLEY HAUERWAS ● ANNE E. PATRICK

Veritatis splendor, John Paul II's long-rumored encyclical on morality, was issued in Rome on October 5 (*Origins*, October 14, 1993). The 179-page document has apparently gone through several drafts in the six years since it was first announced, but contains none of the bombshells promised by early headlines. It is a long and complex document. It speaks of universal moral norms, the natural law, and conscience, but focuses primarily on the Catholic moral tradition and the deviations by revisionist theologians that the pope describes in some detail but without naming names.

The comments of theologians and ethicists gathered in these pages were written at *Commonweal*'s request; we asked that the writers focus on a particular point or two rather than provide an over-all assessment. For each respondent, it was a hurried reading and the comments serve only as a first reaction. Elsewhere in this issue, the editors comment (page 3) on the encyclical and Dennis O'Brien reviews two new books on *Moral Imagination* and *Moral Sense* (page 26). THE EDITORS

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Whatever terror may strike the hearts of moral theologians as they study this encyclical will be offset by their delight at its ponderously convoluted and technical second chapter, which will provide ample opportunity for scrutiny, exegesis, distinctions, comments, and modifications of the papal animadversions about "certain trends of theological thinking and certain philosophical affirmations [which] are incompatible with revealed truth" (*Veritatis splendor*, 29).

John Henry Newman once wrote, to calm the anxieties of a potential convert relative to the imminent definition of papal infallibility, that when a document comes from Rome, two things need occur: the church must receive it and theologians must explicate it. How the church will receive *Veritatis splendor* is not yet known but that the theologians will comment is beyond discussion.

Veritatis splendor is very much a papal document. John Paul II generally uses the personal pronoun "I" (little of the Olympian "we" here) in addressing himself to the bishops, both to warn about unacceptable moral theories and to urge vigilance over those who propose them. There may well be bishops in the country who will know how to invigilate those who do write, but theirs will not be an easy task as any nonprofessional moralist (like myself) who reads chapter 2 will soon learn.

Be that as it may, some things are quite clear. The pope desires to rehabilitate the distinction between mortal and venial sin; he is insistent that there are fundamental acts which are intrinsically evil (i.e., there are exceptionless norms in human behavior); he warns against any concept of human freedom that results in absolute autonomy without reference to transcendence; he resists the idea that morality can be shaped by an unwarranted appeal to the "behavioral sciences" (a term he returns to more than once); he writes that moral theologians must be at the service of the church in their external and internal assent to the authoritative teaching of the magisterium and, if they are not, they should be removed; that the Christian life makes heroic demands "under the shadow of the cross" and one should not shrink from those demands (chapter 3 has a long brooding meditation on martyrdom as essential to the Christian life).

How characterize this encyclical? To my mind it is this generation's *Humani generis*—Pius XII's 1950 encyclical which pitted the school of theology regnant in Rome against *la nouvelle théologie* emanating, maximally, from France. That encyclical attempted to block a kind of theology which, in the opinion of Papa Pacelli, undermined the foundations of that faith. By a curious twist of fate, the theological school which fell under papal stricture would triumph a generation later at Vatican II.

Veritatis splendor, while paying lip service to various theological schools, quite clearly opts for one (one could name names), but is cast in the language and vision of the pope's personalism: a heady blend of scriptural eisegesis, phenomenology, and Thomism. When the soundbites fade away, the theological analysis, fought out on the pages of the journals, will begin. One can only hope that the unhappy repressions coming from Rome before and after *Humani generis* will not be repeated. They probably will not, but who can gauge

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the chilling effect on theological discussion? Only time will tell if the theological worldview informing this encyclical will stand the test of the future and be received in the church in the way that John Paul clearly intends. One can only pray that the urgent grandeur of his moral vision not get lost in the theological squabbles which are sure to ensue. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham, a regular contributor to Commonweal, *chairs the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame.*

Joseph A. Komonchak

Four men taught me moral theology in Rome in the early 1960s, a Spaniard, a German, a Canadian, and an American. None of them talked about method; and words like "deontology," "teleology," and "proportionalism" never darkened the doors of the students' minds. I speak on this encyclical, then, *tamquam minus sapiens.*

I do, however, have some knowledge of magisterial statements, and the one that came immediately to mind as I read *Veritatis splendor* was Pius XII's encyclical *Humani generis* (1950), whose subtitle explained its object: "Some False Opinions Which Threaten to Undermine the Foundations of Catholic Doctrine." Substitute "morality" for "doctrine" and you have the rough purpose of this new papal text.

Humani generis was issued after several years of theological controversy and was widely considered to represent the positions of the opponents of a theology derisively described as "new." What Pius XII's encyclical said, however, often fell far short of what those opponents had hoped for, and very few of those who were thought to be its targets considered themselves to have been pierced by its arrows. (Henri de Lubac, for example, denied to his dying days that he ever taught what was condemned in *Humani generis*, even though it was nearly universally believed that he was one of its chief targets, not least of all by de Lubac's Father General.)

I take the primary purpose of this encyclical, like *Humani generis*, to be that of recalling certain non-negotiable aspects of Catholic teaching as the outer limits within which Catholic theological reflection ought to take place: in this case, that the Christian gospel has certain moral implications, that morality is not a matter of mere subjective decision, that appeals to sincerity of conscience do not suffice for judgments about the goodness of an act, that one's basic life-orientation (fundamental option) has to be reflected in the way one makes one's particular decisions in one's daily life, etc. I expect that such affirmations are the ones that are most likely to receive general approval, at least within the church.

Like Pius XII's document, the new encyclical describes vague tendencies, but names no names (an old Roman practice). The tendencies are said to lead to clear departures from Catholic truth, but the nature of this implication is not specified (e.g., whether it is logical, psychological, etc.). Bishops are asked to be vigilant lest the tendencies lead to the unfortunate results.

To judge from prepublication publicity, there is a good chance that *Veritatis splendor* will fall far short of what certain people either hoped or feared. If what happened after *Humani generis* is any indication, however, there is a danger that there will be people, both in Rome and among those who wish to be more Roman than Rome, who will be eager to supply the names the pope does not name, so that, for example, anyone who has ever used the term "fundamental option" will be considered fair game for official or unofficial harassment. Many people, like de Lubac and Yves Congar, unfairly suffered this kind of injustice throughout the 1950s.

To prevent this happening again, I would like to suggest a simple expedient, the one employed by the Second Council of Constantinople as it struggled to overcome the literally bloody disputes that followed upon the Christological controversies provoked by the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. Constantinople II set out a list of what might be called linguistic rules of the game: If anyone says that Christ had two natures but denies by this that Christ was one, *anathema sit.* If anyone says that Christ had one nature but means by this some mixture of divinity and humanity, *anathema sit.*

If an ecumenical council, for the sake of restoring and solidifying unity in the church, could deal in such a fashion with the solemn formulae of our central faith, surely it is possible to imagine analogous efforts in moral questions. One could then ask: When you defend the supremacy of conscience, do you mean that there are no objective criteria of right and wrong? If you defend proportionalism or consequentialism, do you mean that the intrinsic nature of acts is morally insignificant? If you invoke the fundamental option, do you consider what sorts of particular choices someone makes morally indifferent? Etc.

This could make for a serious conversation, from which the church and society can only benefit. Real and sometimes hard questions would be asked, but those who may wish to ask them would also have to be ready to listen and to learn. Few of us like to have to answer hard questions, and patience and docility are not the most common of virtues. But perhaps such a conversation will be the best way at once to take this encyclical seriously and to prevent it from being used, as *Humani generis* too often was, as a rude club with which to settle scores. □

The Rev. Joseph A. Komonchak is professor of theology at The Catholic University of America.

Dennis M. Doyle

JOHN PAUL II, invoking his authority as the successor of Peter, though not the solemn *ex cathedra* infallibility of his office, has spoken his mind about contemporary winds blowing in moral theology. The pope discerns that the world has degenerated morally and socially, and he sees a remedy for Catholics in his confident reassertion of the certainty of the gospel and of the church's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

teaching regarding fundamental moral truths. Although most of the encyclical is a general treatise on the relationship between law and freedom, the pope makes specific references to abortion, artificial contraception, homosexual acts, euthanasia, genocide, the abuse of workers, and many other prohibitions as examples of negative precepts that can never be violated.

I affirm strongly the basic message of this encyclical, the need for a renewal of moral seriousness. I agree with the pope that human societies are in moral decline, that huge segments of the population do not seem to know right from wrong, and that a moral relativism undergirds our most serious social problems. I also concur that there truly are things that are immoral no matter what the circumstances.

I foresee the biggest source of tension in the reception of the encyclical in that many Catholics will make a personal list of absolutely inviolable moral precepts considerably shorter than that of the pope. For example, a given Catholic might agree that abortion (except in rare cases where the life of the mother is threatened), genocide, the abuse of workers, and adultery are always wrong but think that artificial contraception and homosexual acts can be matters of individual conscience when concrete circumstances are taken into account. Lists will differ somewhat, but many Catholics will be able to affirm the basic reassertion of inviolable moral principles without in conscience being able to embrace the entire list of specific examples.

John Paul, however, teaches that the individual conscience should not play a role in determining which moral principles are inviolable. These principles are determined by the church's authority through natural law in the light of divine revelation. The conscience should play a role only in applying such principles in concrete circumstances.

Respected theologian Francis Sullivan presents a different point of view. In his book, *Magisterium* (Paulist, 1983), he holds that Catholics should approach ordinary church teaching with a basic attitude of openness. If, however, a Catholic, after a serious attempt to conform his or her mind and will to a teaching, is unable to do so, what occurs is a legitimate disagreement. This position is in line with widely accepted interpretations of Vatican II and with a later Vatican-sponsored theological commission. It is also in line with the teaching about artificial contraception by several episcopal conferences, which have said that those who disagree should remain open-minded, continue to research and study, retain a basic respect for church teaching, and not try to persuade others away from the official line. Even the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its document on dissent ("The Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian," 1990) acknowledged that theologians at times have legitimate disagreements and that authentic doctrinal development can occur (and has occurred) through such disputes.

Although I am always careful to place fundamental beliefs on a much deeper level than doubts and questions, the possibility of legitimate disagreement for theologians and for other believers has been very important to me in my own spiritual life and in my teaching. The pope, however, says:

> The negative precepts of the natural law are universally valid. They oblige each and every individual, always and in every circumstance. It is a matter of prohibitions which forbid a given action *semper et pro semper*, without exception, because the choice of this kind of behavior is in no case compatible with the goodness of the will of the acting person, with his vocation to life with God and to communion with his neighbor. It is prohibited—to everyone and in every case—to violate these precepts (52).

If I read the document correctly, the pope is not exactly offering strong support here for legitimate disagreement as an officially endorsed option. He is expressly forbidding it when it comes to negative precepts identified by the church as inviolable.

The autonomy of individual believers is a big issue at stake in this encyclical. The pope believes that the church's proclamation of the established truth aids rather than inhibits a person's freedom. As with conscience, there is plenty of room for autonomy after the truth of basic principles has been accepted. In the pope's mind, any position that does not promote the objective truth prior to practical application suffers from "subjectivism."

It is precisely the "turn to the subject" and the taking seriously of human experience that characterize modern thought. The moral positions dismissed by the pope as subjectivist are often those taken by Catholic thinkers whose life work has attempted a creative synthesis of subjectivity and objectivity. I think of the late philosopher Bernard Lonergan, who said that "objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity." Lonergan argued that objective knowledge is achievable both through the fragile processes of human subjectivity and through belief. From this perspective, the best defense against relativism lies not in confining subjectivity to a neatly defined box, but in exploring the human subject's capacities and responsibilities. Lonergan took the turn to the subject, which admittedly has led some others to subjectivism and moral relativism, and used it as the foundation for reestablishing human understanding and knowing in a manner that addresses the concerns of the modern mind. The pope has not taken such a turn.

I know from my experience as a teacher that many students are turned off by overconfident proclamations of absolute certitude. I think that the pope could get a lot further in reestablishing basic respect for the ordinary magisterium if he would be a bit more hesitant, if he would share his concerns for certainty with a little less certainty. If the pope would act in a more broadly consultative manner to express the faith of the church, if he would take more seriously the experience of everyday believers, and if he would explain more fully his point about "recognizing the possible limitations of the human arguments employed by the magisterium" (111), more people would take his words more deeply to heart. Would the pope himself be willing to use as an example of the magisterium's limitations the story of how Vatican II reversed the position against religious freedom expressed in the 1864 "Syllabus of Errors" on the basis of a new understanding and appreciation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of human autonomy and freedom of conscience?

In the modern world, as in the deepest currents of the Catholic tradition, the willingness to admit faults and wrongs and the need for personal growth is not a weakness but a strength. As it stands, the present encyclical, for all of its many positive and profound elements, may do more to divide the church than to unite it. The pope is following his own conscience, which looks first to principles and only secondarily to consequences. I hope that Catholics throughout the world, no matter where they stand on the spectrum of beliefs, will, out of love for the church, listen respectfully and work out the consequences together. □

Dennis M. Doyle teaches ecclesiology at the University of Dayton. He is the author of The Church Emerging from Vatican II *(Twenty-Third Publications).*

Charles E. Curran

Veritatis splendor belongs to the literary genre of an apology or defense and has all the problems and weaknesses often associated with that genre.

The encyclical deals primarily with moral theories and correctly recognizes that many Catholic moral theologians today disagree with some of the methods and approaches of the manuals of moral theology. From the pope's perspective, the present reality has to be "certainly a genuine crisis."

The defensive nature of the document comes through especially in its inadequate, caricatured, and even erroneous interpretations of the positions taken by many contemporary Catholic moral theologians. (The document never mentions names or gives citations.) Proponents of fundamental option, proportionalism, and other newer approaches are not treated fairly. At times the encyclical proposes straw persons in order to shoot them down.

The document's "we versus them" mentality fails to recognize that revisionists or dissenting theologians agree with many of the pope's presuppositions and approaches. No Catholic moral theologian embraces relativism, subjectivism, positivism, and individualism.

Pope John Paul II sees the root problem as "detaching human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth." No contemporary Catholic moral theologian I know has ever absolutized freedom and/or conscience or failed to point out their necessary relationship to truth. The real question remains the old one—what is moral truth?

The encyclical uses the word "truth" or "the truth" on about every page beginning with the title page. The document never describes what is meant or embraced by truth, but seems to understand truth as an undifferentiated mass of whatever has been taught in the past by the papal magisterium.

The pope never mentions the hierarchy of truths, a very important reality found in Vatican II's documents and frequently developed since. Not all truths are of the same or equal value or importance. Interestingly, the document does not even make the distinction between infallible and noninfallible teaching.

Nothing is said about how the papal teaching office learns the moral truth. *Veritatis splendor* leaves the impression that the Holy Spirit gives the knowledge and understanding directly to the pope. In reality the hierarchical teaching office enjoys the assistance of the Holy Spirit, but it must use all the human ways of knowing the truth. *The Declaration on Religious Freedom* of Vatican II recognized that the hierarchical magisterium learned from the experience of people of good will.

Other examples of defensive caricature include the description of dissent as a form of politics and polemics in opposition to ecclesial communion, and blanket condemnations of opposition to church teaching. Historically, papal teaching has changed because of the differing positions taken by theologians. Paul publicly rebuked Peter in the early church. As a "dissenter," I see myself as serving the ecclesial community through disagreements on some matters that are not core to faith.

The document correctly assumes that many people even within the church will have problems with what is written here and consequently develops a spiritual strategy in keeping with this defensiveness. The second of the three chapters is entitled "Do Not Be Conformed to the World" and the third "Lest the Cross of Christ Be Emptied of Its Power." The truth here contained will meet opposition and rejection as did Jesus.

Such an approach, while having some validity, is strange indeed coming from a tradition which claims its moral teachings are based on human reason and open to convincing all human beings. In addition the Catholic church claims, as the encyclical repeats, to be "an expert in humanity," whose moral encyclicals have lately been addressed to all people of good will.

I expected the basic thrust taken in this encyclical but the actual document itself is quite disappointing. The encyclical does not accurately portray the true picture of Catholic moral theology today. Likewise the pope has no appreciation for a loyal opposition that disagrees on some specific issues but finds itself in basic and fundamental agreement with the core of the Catholic moral tradition. The practical consequences of this document will only come to light in the future, but my forecast for the immediate future is quite bleak. □

The Rev. Charles E. Curran is Elizabeth Scurlock University Professor of Human Values at Southern Methodist University.

Janet E. Smith

Many who do not profess to be Roman Catholic or to have much sympathy for Roman Catholicism nonetheless respect the church's strong stand on universal, inalienable human rights. They laud the church's insistence that employers pay a just wage and provide decent working conditions. They laud the church's condemnation of totalitarianism, torture, and genocide. Moreover,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the church has always called mankind to heroic witness to these and other moral truths. It teaches that individuals and societies should labor to ensure that all of mankind enjoy fundamental human rights and that we be willing to die, if necessary, in protection of those rights; that we be willing to die rather than to do moral evil willingly.

Veritatis splendor argues that the church's teachings on human rights and moral issues are grounded in a commitment to an objective, universal truth, most fully manifested in the person of Christ. This truth demands our allegiance and our love and our attempt to live in accord with the truth for only thus will we attain eternal life. We must use our human freedom to make the choice to follow the truth rather than to invent truths more to our liking.

The encyclical touches upon many of the primary challenges to traditional morality over the last several decades. It carefully discusses the claim that such acts as "having sexual intercourse with someone against that person's will" is considered a premoral evil or ontic evil in the view of the dissenters (my example), not to be assessed morally until the intention, circumstances, and consequences are known. It reasserts the teaching of the church that some acts are intrinsically evil (never to be the object of human choice), no matter what the intention, circumstances, or consequences.

The widespread dissent within the church against the church's teaching on intrinsic evil has focused largely on sexual issues. Much energy seems to be put largely in the service of arguing that there should be no absolute prohibitions against premarital sex, contraception, divorce, homosexual acts, for instance. To support this position, some ethicists and theologians make pleas for the autonomous exercise of human freedom and the sovereignty of the human conscience and charge the church with physicalism and biologism. *Veritatis splendor* addresses these questions directly, though not, of course, exhaustively. It insists that man is not free to manipulate his bodily processes at will and that true freedom and a right use of conscience require man to attend to the natural inclinations of the body, to be attentive to the true human good.

Veritatis splendor strives to show the links between the love of Christ, the Ten Commandments, human dignity, natural law, authentic human freedom, right use of conscience, and human rights. John Paul implores theologians to clarify these matters for the faithful rather than to be sources of confusion. In this sense, those who find the church unpersuasive on sexual questions must come to see that there is a seamless garment in these matters; those who attempt to snip the thread of the church's teaching on intrinsic evil threaten to unravel the whole, to leave us without defenses against some of the worst evils threatening societies and individuals today. For have we not witnessed sufficient atrocities in our times in the name of good intentions and prospective good consequences? Should we not take up the challenge of the new evangelism, should we not challenge mankind to follow Christ in his loving and law-abiding ways to the point of martyrdom? □

Janet E. Smith is associate professor of philosophy at the University of Dallas.

Lisa Sowle Cahill

The lasting contribution of *Splendor veritatis* is its affirmation of objectivity in moral thinking, against relativism and the absolutization of personal choice. However, the encyclical has multiple agendas, not all well reconciled with the first.

A second agenda is to place moral theology in a faith context, both to maintain the connection between the moral life and religious commitment, and to assert the authority of the magisterium over theological interpretation. A third agenda is to implement magisterial authority by warning pastors of their duties of vigilance toward the purity of doctrine and protection of "the faithful." A few remarks will be offered on each of these agendas in turn. A final word addresses the encyclical's grating use of sexist language.

The first agenda is to place moral freedom in the context of a notion of objective moral truth. This notion is at the heart of the "natural law" tradition. North American culture (at which the encyclical seems in large part to be targeted) exhibits pluralism, values freedom, and often accommodates moral confusion by resorting to guarantees of free choice and informed consent. Not wanting to be dogmatic or totalitarian, we edge away from difficult and divisive decisions about the morally best action or policy. Hence we find it difficult to advance toward substantive public consensus about the human good or the good society. Examples are rife in debates about bioethics policy, from abortion to infertility therapies to physician-assisted suicide to health-care reform.

Against an overly relativistic respect for pluralism, the encyclical appeals to Catholic moral tradition as established on a confidence in reasonable debate among diverse groups about values they share in common. In fact, the conviction that its moral insights are based on common human values, and not on religious faith or church teaching alone, motivates the Roman Catholic church's advocacy on a number of social issues, extending at least as far back as the first modern papal social encyclical, *Rerum novarum* (1891). *Splendor veritatis* affirms that "the natural law expresses the dignity of the human person and lays the foundation for his fundamental rights and duties. It is universal in its precepts and its authority extends to all mankind. *This universality does not ignore the individuality of human beings*, nor is it opposed to the absolute uniqueness of each person." But it aims at a "communion of persons" (51). Moreover, the human body itself is a valid point of reference in the quest for moral meaning; the body is not simply "raw material" whose value depends only on our choices about it (46, 48). This is an important insight for sexual and biomedical ethics, as many feminists would agree.

In my view, the encouragement of humane and consensus-seeking public discourse about the relation of controverted ethical issues to the common good, is one of the most important potential contributions of Catholic moral theology in today's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

culture. *Splendor veritatis* may give impetus to theologians who are renewing the natural law tradition in service of such discourse.

Unfortunately, the other agendas of the encyclical tend to undermine this contribution. These are to teach that the moral life finds its origins in the divine law and its completion in faith (to which few Catholic theologians would object); and to instruct the bishops to rely on the authoritative moral teaching of the church in identifying and rejecting erroneous moral viewpoints (on which many interpreters in the press and in the church are likely to focus as the "meat" of this document).

Rejected interpretations of Catholic ethics include the "autonomous ethics" of some continental theologians, said to separate the moral law from divine authorship; theories of the "fundamental option," said to make its concrete expression in moral choices irrelevant; and a "proportionalist" weighing of good and evil aspects of acts, viewed as equivalent to subjectivism and consequentialism. The second and third agendas are put forward in a confessional and even fideist mode which pulls the rug out from under the church's and the moral theologians' credibility as advocates of the human and the common goods. The morality of human acts is not to be established by the human sciences, nor by accumulated human wisdom, even of persons of faith, and certainly not by the goodness of intention alone (112). Human nature is so "affected by sin" and "[o]nly Christian faith points out to man the way...." "It is the gospel which reveals the full truth about man and his moral journey, and thus enlightens and admonishes sinners..." (112). Moral theology and moral reasoning thus become the presentation and justification of Catholic doctrine, whatever the "limitations of the human arguments employed"(165). The encyclical assumes that theologians need a mandate from the local bishop (110), asserts that moral theologians must give not only external but also internal assent to all teaching (165), and enjoins bishops to take away the name "Catholic" from institutions that fail to abide by doctrinal requirements (116).

It will bring shame on the drafters and implementers of this encyclical if it causes further counterproductive accusations and divisions within the church. It is time for Catholics to call a ceasefire on issues like contraception, and spend their energies on making a more attractive case, to the wider culture, for commitment and parenthood as complementary aspects of sexual fulfillment.

At a meeting of a national policy advisory board last month, another member advised me that my reservations about the compatibility of sperm and ovum donation with the human meaning of parenthood were just the result of my Catholic attitudes and hence not at all relevant to the policy debate. The fideist and authoritarian conclusion of this encyclical will increase the marginalization of Catholics who try to enhance the role of human values in our culture's moral sensibilities.

Finally, the sexist language. Many Catholic feminists, and not only so-called "radical feminists," view the church as singularly unresponsive to women's viewpoints and experiences in defining the human goods of sexuality, parenthood, marriage, and gender-related ecclesial and social roles. This encyclical insists repeatedly that there must be norms prohibiting "intrinsically evil acts," especially in sexual behavior. Yet its stubbornly noninclusive language confirms that such norms are still being defined within a male-oriented mindset. A concluding section on Mary was no doubt meant to add a pastoral angle, but it portrays her in stereotypical feminine terms, as a compassionate and merciful mother to "man." "She understands sinful man and loves him with a mother's love" (121). This kind of thing only adds fuel to the fire of those who claim that the church's interpretations of our sexual "nature" are simply cultural products, and patriarchal ones at that. □

Lisa Sowle Cahill is professor of Christian ethics at Boston College.

Stanley Hauerwas

Veritatis splendor is a unique and remarkable document. John Paul II observes that this is the first time that the magisterium of the church has set forth in detail the fundamental elements of moral theology. That he has done so is a great gift not only to Roman Catholics but I hope to all Christians struggling to discern how we are to live in this strange time between times. That John Paul has written so eloquently on the nature of the Christian moral life is a great testimony to the Catholic ability to withstand the ethos of freedom and accordingly is a service to all Christians.

As one trained in as well as a practitioner of that odd discipline within Protestantism called Christian ethics, I found this document a gold mine of insight and direction. For those who have not been part of the debates in Christian ethics, or what Catholics call moral theology, it might be easy to miss the significance of what the pope has done. Many Christians would naturally assume that in writing on matters moral, one might, as John Paul has, use Scripture as well as take a determinative Christocentric perspective. Yet many trained in "ethics" and moral theology find quite sophisticated ways to separate "ethics" from "theology" in the name of being "responsible" to "society." Happily the pope writes as a theologian profoundly displaying the difference Christ should make not only for how Christians live but also for how moral theologians think.

For example, the commentary the pope provides on Matthew 19:16 is a remarkable way to begin the encyclical. Karl Barth also used the young man's question, "Teacher, what good must I do to have eternal life?" as the central focus of his account of Christian ethics in the *Church Dogmatics II/2*. I am tempted to make more of this fascinating parallel than is probably justified, but at the very least that Barth and John Paul have found this passage so significant is a wonderful indication that Catholics and Protestants are rediscovering that "ethics" for Christians cannot be separated from the one who has called us into existence.

This is not just a "homiletical point" by John Paul as is clear from his extraordinary Christocentric display of the law. His

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

discussion of the law reminds me of Calvin's discussion of the Decalogue in the *Institutes*. Calvin argues there that the command, though put negatively in fact, entails positive obligations for Christians. Thus, it is not sufficient that we not steal from our brother and sister but we are required to give of our own property if we are to live according to the law.

As important as John Paul's refusal to separate the "ethical order" from the "order of salvation" is his sense of the politics of this move. I am not referring to the tired and uninteresting internal "liberal/conservative" divide in Catholicism, but rather the pope's willingness to challenge the politics of modernity. John Paul rightly sees we are confronted by social systems and corresponding moralities that cannot help but deny that all creation is teleologically ordered to the worship of God. These systems make freedom an end in and of itself because, as Kant saw, freedom is all that is left once the world is mechanistically construed.

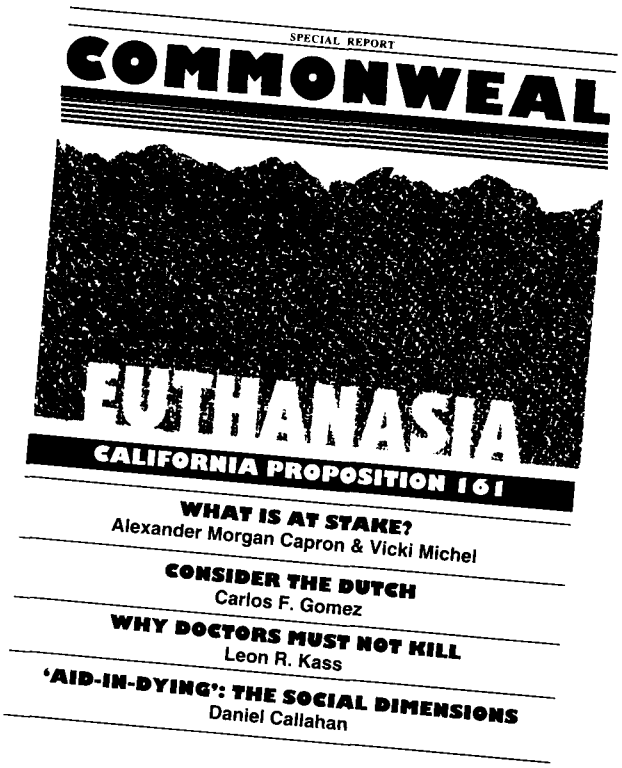
Against that alternative, John Paul reminds us that Christians believe that we are part of a created order that is teleologically shaped to glorify God. Accordingly, freedom, and the corresponding views of morality based upon the assumption of the autonomy of reason, are foreign to the Christian presumption that any freedom worth having is the freedom that comes from truthful service to God. Therefore, recent accounts of natural law, which draw more on Kant's account of morality than that of Aquinas, are rejected.

As one often critical of those that would present the Christian moral life in terms of natural law, I found little reason to object to John Paul's account of natural law. That the moral law is "in principle" accessible to human reason, as the pope maintains, I assume any Christian should believe. The crucial issues involve his contention that we must be well instructed to rightly know the "law" of our being. Our problem is that most of us are now so well trained by the practices of "freedom," we are incapable of acknowledging the moral truths that should otherwise be available.

No doubt the discussion surrounding this encyclical will be focused on the pope's upholding that certain acts are always wrong. Even though I have often found the arguments about why certain acts are intrinsically evil unconvincing, I think that John Paul puts the discussion of these matters rightly by arguing such actions cannot be made part of the well-lived life. Thus John Paul avoids a deontological construal of these matters by framing the characterization of the actions within a teleological framework.

I must admit as one who has always found the concept of "fundamental option," and particularly the corresponding idea of "premoral" evil, mystifications, I particularly enjoyed the encyclical's criticisms of those peculiar notions. With that said, however, I wish that John Paul might have said more about the importance of the virtues for the moral life as I suspect that the language of "fundamental option" was the result of the loss of Aquinas's understanding of the significance of the virtues for Christian moral existence.

John Paul's refusal to separate ethics from theology is perhaps best displayed in his extraordinary discussion of martyr-



Additional copies of this special report are available from COMMONWEAL, 15 Dutch Street, New York, New York 10038 Telephone: 212-732-0800

Single copies: $1 (Please include a 9 x 12 self-addressed envelope with 52¢ stamp)

Bulk Orders:
1000 copies: $200
500 copies: $150
100 copies: $ 50
plus handling and UPS charges

COMMONWEAL
15 Dutch Street, New York, N.Y. 10038

Please send me
_____ copies of the EUTHANASIA report
☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me

Name
Address
City, State, Zip

10/22/93

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dom in chapter 3. That discussion is a judgment on many of us who have reduced Christian ethics to the ethos of freedom. For it is, I believe, the pope's belief that if Christians are to resist the allurements of the ethics of freedom, as well as the politics built on that ethic, which often takes the name of democracy, we may well be called to make sacrifices and to suffer in ways we barely envision. We are, however, in John Paul's debt for helping us get the problem right.

The Splendor of Truth is an eloquent encyclical for which I am grateful. It would have more power, however, if John Paul had embodied it by moving to Bosnia and refusing to leave until the Croatians ceased killing the Muslims. The murder called war in that unhappy place is clearly an "intrinsic evil" that he should see is destroying the souls of the Catholic faithful in Croatia. Let the pope so live and he will discover that the authority he now can only claim will be a reality. □

Stanley Hauerwas is professor of theological ethics at the Divinity School of Duke University.

Anne E. Patrick

The first image I received while pondering *Veritatis splendor* is that of a Khasi leader in Nothern India, insisting decades ago on ancient taboos against cutting wood from sacred groves, but unable to persuade his hearers. Meanwhile rationalists call the ancient wisdom nonsense and "prove" with their axes that "nothing bad will happen" to those who take the conveniently located trees. Indeed, the forest gods do not devour the modernizers on the spot, as ancient stories had threatened, and people use the once-forbidden trees without respect for the interconnectedness of life, or concern for future generations. The resulting desertification is tragic for all concerned, including nonhuman creatures and the earth.

A second image is that of Saint Peter approving change in first-century moral life in a way that respected the essence of the fledgling community's traditional faith. This development of doctrine is described in Acts 10 in terms of a "vision" Peter receives, after which he concludes that the divine will transcends human abilities to codify it. In a dream, Peter is hungry and hears a voice enjoining him to "kill and eat" animals traditionally forbidden. The dialogue remains instructive today: "But Peter said, 'Far be it from me, Lord, for never did I eat anything common or unclean.' And there came a voice a second time to him, 'What God has cleansed, do not thou call common'" (Acts 10:15-16).

Neither image quite fits the substance of this encyclical, but they frame my response. I offer the first because it depicts what is at stake, the tragedy we need to prevent, and the second because it symbolizes the goal we must achieve where human sexuality is concerned before it is too late.

Human sexuality is not the stated theme of the encyclical, but rather the subtext that occasioned and governs this text, which itself offers inspiration for continuing work on two urgent tasks: (1) distinguishing the essential wisdom on human embodiment and interpersonal relations from the classicist casing in which Catholic sexual morality was packaged centuries ago; and (2) communicating it in a way that respects the insight of Vatican II's *Dignitatis humanae* that the truth we all must seek and obey "cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power." Such power entails conviction, rather than coercion on the one hand or blind acceptance on the other.

The encyclical's stress on human dignity as a limiting principle for ethics is eminently wise, as is its insistence on an objective moral order. (I do not, however, recognize the positions of such revisionist moral theologians as Bernard Häring, Charles Curran, Richard McCormick, and company in the "teleologists, relativists, proportionalists, subjectivists," and absolutizers of freedom described in this letter.) How bishops and moral theologians respond will be crucial. I believe moral theologians will do well in the future to avoid the kind of dissent condemned in the encyclical, forgoing "carefully orchestrated protests and polemics carried on in the media." If we do, the encyclical gives reason to hope that large-scale withdrawal of mandates to teach and designations of "Catholic" will not occur. I also hope that bishops will understand the deep love of the church and concern for the truth and power of its authentic moral teaching that have motivated recourse to secular media in the past. As the encyclical recognizes, we live in a time of crisis. Its proportions rival that of first-century debates about Gentiles and the Law, and subsequent crises occasioned by Aristotelianism and by modern science, philosophy, and historical consciousness. Because the stakes are so great for life on this planet, we should proceed with energy, caution, and trust in God.

Both bishops and theologians will find in the New Testament many ideas to complement the encyclical, which draws heavily on the love-mysticism of John and the law-emphasis of Matthew. After contemplating the encyclical's focal story from Matthew 19 about the rich young man who went away sad because his riches kept him from following Jesus, some may observe that "the danger of riches" could apply to wealth and power beyond the material order. Others may suggest that Matthew's parable in chapter 25 about the buried and invested talents may be instructive where the natural law tradition is concerned. Still others may offer a Lucan corrective to Matthew's preference for "poverty of spirit," insisting that any teaching in Jesus' name must mean good news for the materially poor and oppressed, especially women and children. I believe, for reasons I lack space to develop here, that this last emphasis will eventually mean letting go of some formulas regarding sexual morality that are less universally valid than this encyclical implies is the case. What is urgent is that new formulas, based on a renewed natural law approach that emphasizes justice, be approved soon and that honesty and charity prevail in the meanwhile. □

Anne E. Patrick, S.N.J.M., is professor of religion at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. She is currently completing Liberating Conscience: Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology *for Crossroad Publishing Company.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AN OFFER THEY COULDN'T REFUSE

THE APOSTLES BECOME FISHERS OF MEN

RICHARD GOODMAN

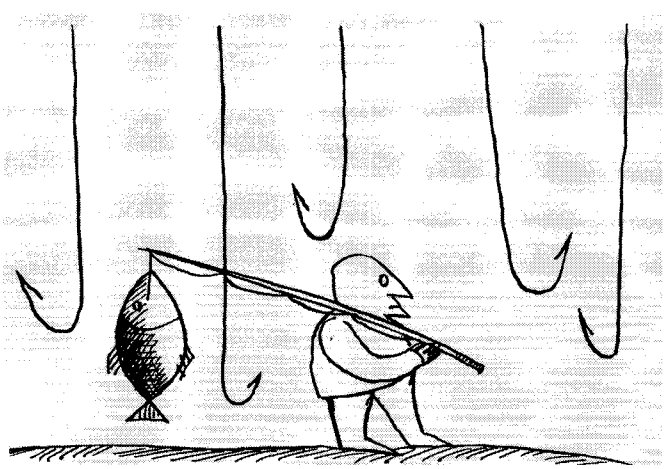
In November 1991, I went to Sanary-sur-Mer, a small town on the Mediterranean coast of France a few miles west of Toulon to write a book about fishermen. I stayed eight months. In that time, I went out with the fishermen on their boats in all weather, in the fall, winter, spring, and early summer. Most of the men fish waters about two hours off the coast in thirty-foot, diesel-powered boats. They cast their mile- to two-mile-long nets to depths of up to 600 feet. They work hard, as fishermen always have. During the course of my stay, I talked with the men, with Achille, Lucien, Serge, Jean-Paul, Jeannot, and Angelo about almost every subject imaginable—many far outside the realm of fishing. It's not surprising that religion was one of these subjects.

The fishermen were not religious, at least not formally or openly religious. None of them ever went to church. Yet, they had their icons tacked on the cabin walls of the boats—Saint Joseph or Saint Peter or, in Achille's case, the patron saint of lobster fishermen. If you pressed them about their beliefs, the first thing many of them would say was that they did not like priests and felt no need to step inside any church to validate whatever feeling about God they might have. In Peter Matthiessen's moving book, *Men's Lives*, which is about fishing and fishermen on the south fork of Long Island, religion is hardly mentioned at all. Matthiessen's men lead much more perilous lives than my men in France, so I was surprised by this. I was until I spent more time with French fishermen. Then I came to realize that these men had come upon too many instances where God had not helped them and that, in fact, nothing was clearer to them than the simple idea that they were alone. With the sea.

Yet whenever you think of fishermen, it's hard not to eventually summon up the Apostles. We remember that four of them—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—were fishermen. And we remember best the poetry of Jesus' words, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." What mystery and allure in those ten words! And they followed, as we all know, at once. Hearing that marvelous promise, wouldn't you at least consider leaving all else behind and—following? It's hard not to think of the Apostles when you are with fishermen, because anyone who has a personal interest in Christianity—whether it be emotional or intellectual or both—seeks to be able to *see* these twelve men better. If we are more or less resigned to a prettified, Italianate idea of Jesus, we can still hold out hope for a more direct, human, vision of the Apostles. After having lived and worked with French fishermen for eight months, I can tell you certain things about four of these Apostles because they were fishermen.

The work has changed, of course. Today's fishermen not only have boats with massive engines but radar, sonar, and short-wave radio. But certain things endure. Fishermen still venture out on waters that are volatile and featureless. They still leave in the dead of night or just before dawn to catch the fish at their feeding times. They still use nets, though the fabric is different. It is still a raw and dangerous job, but more important, even with the technology, it is still unreliable. After 2,000 years, it is still a job with absolutely no security. Simply put, men today—as Peter, Andrew, James, and John did—cast their nets into the sea and pull them up, not knowing whether there will be fish, or not.

What I can tell you about these Apostles, one of whom would go on to be the first pope and, after his death, possess the keys to the gates of heaven: I can tell you their hands were large and bowl-shaped, and that they had been ripped by fish quills and spines. That perhaps one or two of those pulsing devils remained embedded in a thumb or sensitive finger tip for months and months. Most likely you could have seen the glistening of an irregular scar down the side of a finger from the teeth of a des-



RICHARD GOODMAN *is the author of* French Dirt: The Story of a Garden in the South of France *(Algonquin/HarperCollins). This essay has been excerpted from his next book, also to be published by Algonquin.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

perate fish they had netted. (Some of the fish the Apostles caught in the Sea of Galilee are similar to fish men catch off the coast of Sanary today.) Let no one underestimate the efficacy of the teeth of so-called "everyday" fish! The fishermen Apostles' hands were also probably more or less permanently tinted, at least the palms, because the nets they let out and hauled in would have been heavily dyed a dark crimson to protect them from the water's corrosive effect. Their hands would have been flaked with scales, and even hours later, at home, they would still find one or two, nearly invisible, clinging to a nail or embedded in the hair of their fingers. Most memorably, if one of these four men took your hand in his, you would have felt the strength of stone with blood pulsing through it.

And their faces? Their faces would have had a burned look from time spent on the open water. But not always their bodies. They probably would have remained clothed, even in hot weather, to protect themselves from the immense reflective strength of the sun. We know there were exceptions, though, because the Bible says at one point that Peter was stripped for work. Even in Sanary, there was one fisherman who worked almost naked in hot weather—Angelo.

I can tell you that the four Apostles' eyes would have been quite astonishing, especially out on the water. They would have been able to recognize other boats, and so their owners, when they were still smudges on the horizon. And they could have sailed for a landmark that would have seemed a mere wisp, a cloud, but that would have been home. I have been with Achille or Lucien out on the water at dawn when the gray of the water melted into the gray of the so-called day, and have seen them pick out their buoy, a tiny needle out there in that infinity and have not been able to spot it myself until much later, after we decreased the distance by half.

If there was a kind of natural stimulant at the time, at least one of them would have used it—whether it was coffee or something else. Had the Arabs introduced coffee to this part of the Roman Empire yet? Fisherman would have to wait fifteen-hundred years for tobacco, but if it had been available at the time, at least some of them would have smoked it. Not all the fishermen in Sanary were smokers, but Lucien, Angelo, and Jeannot were and they smoked heavily, starting at three o'clock in the morning and continuing relentlessly throughout the day and often just until bedtime, eighteen hours later. Watching them light up in the predawn blackness and take in a lungful of smoke made my own lungs feel constricted. But tobacco has always made hard labor a bit more doable, and so I feel confident that at least one or two of the Apostles would have used tobacco had they been able to. It's funny to wonder which one. I might say Peter, because he was a worrier and a doubter, and those kinds of burdens can often be assuaged with a little help from some nicotine.

In Acts, it is said of Peter and John that "they were uneducated, common men," and I can tell you why. Perhaps it is simply because that was the way it was for most ordinary people at the time, but I have another reason. I can tell you these men had little schooling and probably did not know how to read and write, because they would have joined their fathers on their boats at a very early age. By twelve or thirteen, they would have been doing the work of grown men. In Sanary, Angelo told me that when he was a boy, every day after school he had to go out with his father to lay down their nets. He usually returned by seven, just in time to eat. And every morning before school he had to go out again to haul up the nets. "You can see I didn't have much time for homework," he said. He quit school when he was fourteen. In fact, two or three of the fishermen in Sanary do not know how to read or write and have difficulty signing their own names.

Being uneducated does not make you less honorable, but it is interesting to look at the two letters in the Bible attributed to Peter in this light. They seem to me to have the awkward formality of thoughts dictated and the priggishness of a man suddenly elevated to a position of great moral weight unable to express himself simply and fluidly. But to have seen Peter and Andrew in their own element, on a fishing boat, was to have seen competence and grace and knowledge. They would have moved with tremendous sureness and concision, all their years of hard-fought knowledge in their hands and eyes and steadiness of frame. These four men would have known how to sew sails and mend nets; the latter they would have done with a large, flat needle, rapidly, those battered fingers moving and darting expertly. It is a good thing to watch a man sew his nets. Achille was the best at it, and everyone said so. There was no jealousy there, because quite a few of the fishermen didn't know how, or had given it up, and so didn't care. But I used to wander down to the quay on bad weather days and find Achille on his tethered boat mending his nets. I'd come on board to talk with him but mainly just to watch his hands deftly working. To see him there, his arm raising and lowering as he sewed away as fishermen had done for thousands of years and were still doing all over the world, was to feel close to the eternal. Achille did what Peter had done, and he didn't do it that much differently. They could have worked side by side.

I can tell you that Peter, Andrew, James, and John probably did not know how to swim. Many fishermen throughout the world even today do not know how to swim. Swimming is a *recreation*, and someone must teach you how, and fishermen seldom have time for that, even as boys. So when Christ and his disciples are caught in a storm—Jesus having fallen asleep, which he seemed to do in moments of stress—and they are afraid, remember this: It is scary enough sometimes to be out in a boat on the sea even if you *do* know how to swim. The fishermen Apostles had surely seen other fishermen drown, or hauled up their bodies, and so when Peter falters while walking on water, perhaps we can sympathize. He may not have been able to swim, and firsthand he had seen men killed by the sea. The Sea of Galilee is like the Mediterranean in that storms arise quickly and with violence, often trapping fishermen out in the open in small boats. Isn't it easier to have faith when you have no direct experience with the possible consequences?

Finally, they would have had little or no regard for Roman authority and would have cheated Caesar out of his rendering

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if they could have. Their profession, as it always had been, was a chancy one, so why should the government receive taxes from an income they most likely would never obtain? The fishermen in Sanary were less than forthright with the French government about how many fish they caught and how much they sold them for. "The French government doesn't give a damn about us!" Achille said on more than one occasion. "As far as the French government is concerned, the fishermen in the Var *do not exist*." He and the other fishermen in Sanary felt they received nothing in return for their tax money except restrictions and more restrictions. And now they even received orders from countries other than France through the Common Market! So, how many fish did we catch last year? Wait, I think I have the number right here....

Fishing is unreliable, discouraging, and dangerous. It was in Jesus' time, too. When I was in Sanary, one of the men quit to do something else, and others were always plotting. "I want to be a bodyguard," Serge told me, "for some big shot in Toulon or Marseille. Anything but this." When his brother Jean-Paul had a son, the new father vowed the boy would never even step foot on a boat. I think a lot of the men *would* have done something else, had they been able to. So that makes me wonder about Jesus' words, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" and how suddenly and unreservedly the four men left their nets and joined him. Maybe John, James, Andrew, and Peter thought at last they could do something reliable. Maybe, they might have thought, it was easier to catch men than fish. □

ART

TOO HIGH THE CORNICES

THE MET'S NEW GALLERIES

In a lavish feat of nostalgia, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has spent $12.4 million on the renovation of a wing to house its renowned collection of nineteenth-century paintings and sculptures. The new installation, a suite of twenty-one galleries called the Nineteenth-Century European Paintings and Sculpture Galleries, has been constructed with a classical serenity in mind: visitors walk through arches, past Ionic columns and cornices, and under ovolo moldings with egg-and-dart patterns. With their gleaming parquet floors, daunting wall space, and ageless motifs, the galleries have an imposing, almost regal atmosphere to them, for all the weightless elegance of their particular details. The centerpiece of the new exhibition is Walter Annenberg's gift of fifty-three impressionist and postimpressionist gems, including some miraculous paintings by Cézanne. These sumptuous works will be on display six months of every year, from July to December, until Annenberg's death, when the museum will permanently take over the collection.

The critical consensus on the previous home of the nineteenth-century collection, the Andre Meyer Galleries, was that they had displaced older art into a modernist setting. Detractors claimed that the galleries made "great paintings seem minor," as the senior critic for the *New York Times* recently put it. The Metropolitan curators seem to feel that with the close of the postmodern eighties, the Great Modernist Conflagration has finally burned itself out, and they have seized the opportunity to build a revised interpretation of nineteenth-century art.

The conviction that inspired these new galleries was that, again in the words of the *Times* art critic, "nineteenth-century art looks best in nineteenth-century rooms." And these rooms are indeed calm, spacious, and pleasing to the eye. The problem with the new galleries, though, lies not only in their self-conscious grandeur that often makes the marvelous works they house seem like reproductions straining to live up to their originals' reputations. The problem is also in defining what exactly a nineteenth-century ambiance is.

Architecturally, the representative nineteenth-century style could be neoclassical. But it could just as well be neogothic, or a Beaux Arts eclecticism that includes Renaissance and baroque elements, or English Regency, which could mimic Islamic structures. It might be possible for the right architectural environment to capture the spirit of an age in which the paintings and sculptures were made (never mind that this exhibition covers an epoch with countless contrary spirits). Yet the fact remains that many nineteenth-century artists worked in opposition to whatever they perceived the spirit of their age to be.

In the old Andre Meyer Galleries, the painting collection was hung in a vast rectangular space on walls and obliquely placed movable screens. The effect was disconcertingly satisfying, random beauty springing up out of apparently ordinary chaos. Though the spontaneity could seem willed, the display was the museum equivalent of Chekhov's celebrated imperative for writers to evoke "moonlight on a broken bottle," only here it was the viewers who turned corners and met the epiphanic shards of what was once the big picture.

This style of presentation had much to recommend it. The British philosopher T.E. Hulme's description of romanticism as spilled religion can be applied to most of the art movements that turbulently succeeded each other throughout the nineteenth century. Modernity broke up the vision of infinity that earlier had been held together by sacrament and ritual into the fragments of "isms." Competing rituals of style, each one rooted in a different sacramental-like aesthetic doctrine, flourished with sectarian ardor. Romanticism, realism, impressionism, postimpressionism, symbolism are the colors that stain the windows of nineteenth-century modernity, every movement projecting its own version of visual truth. Perhaps it is no coincidence that, as art in the nineteenth century progresses, the source of light in paintings becomes more and more obscure.

The neoclassical grandiosity of the new galleries does very little to help the viewer appreciate Daumier's *The Laundress*, or Millet's peasants, or anything by Courbet, whom French police chased around Paris during the 1848 revolution after having got wind of the artist's plans to blow up the column in the Place Vendôme. (The father of modern realism, Courbet refused

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to depict anything that could not be seen: "Show me an angel," he once famously declared, "and I'll paint one.") The lofty, sedate room devoted entirely to portraits by Manet is, in its sensitivity to Manet's cultural stature, strangely insensitive to the overturning of tradition that the creator of the scandalous *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* was trying to accomplish with his harsh photographic light, dislocated figures, and self-conscious irony. The earlier galleries might have made "great paintings seem minor"—though anyone who can tell the difference should not worry about coming away with that impression—but the failing of this new space is to make great paintings seem merely great.

Of course, some curators today make the mistake of narrowly projecting contemporary issues onto older art; thus in accompanying catalogues and wall texts, one exclusively gets the artist's violating "gaze" instead of the nude, the forms of power behind the captive forms of artistically rendered objects, and so on. For all their undoubtedly good intentions, the Metropolitan's curators are equally reductionist, but in the opposite direction. What sinks this new permanent exhibition, a neoclassical *Titanic* sporting distinguished passengers and high society polish, is the deadly iceberg of *Kultur*.

A fantastic and proprietary notion of culture as an autonomous, self-enclosed realm has been created in these galleries, as if the paintings had no meaning or force outside the generic standards of officially cultivated sensibility that the new décor now represents. They grace the walls like debutantes at a coming-out ball. The complicatedly layered aims—personal, philosophical, spiritual, aesthetic—toward which all these wildly different artistic identities worked have been ruled unreal by the caveat of business, law, and banking money.

Consequently, some of the hanging is uninspired, like the Turners facing off across a large room with Delacroixs on the opposite wall, as though it were the eve of the Battle of Agincourt. Some is almost vaudevillian, like the mediocre d'Aligny stuck next to a doorway between some masterful Corots. And some is ridiculous, like the Renoir watercolor hung below a watercolor by Cézanne, a contrast that might begin a movement urging the museum to sell its Renoirs and use the money to expand the often overcrowded cafeteria.

There is no feeling, as there once was in the Andre Meyer Galleries, of suddenly coming upon art in the midst of life, and of happily paying for it in the currency of new sensations, thoughts, or perceptions. The viewer's response has been encoded in the columns and cornices, the archways and moldings: you shall be overwhelmed by the power of culture—as if institutionalized culture were not time and time again overwhelmed by Rousseau's secrets, Corot's silvery sentience, Monet's beautiful lies, Degas's hardness, Van Gogh's mad yellows, Gauguin's lustful geometry, Cézanne's post-Edenic apples, which are not meant to be seen but bitten by modern eyes impatient for appearances to fall.

The result—until familiarity sooner or later pushes these unbearably magnificent rooms back into the margins between the paintings, where they belong—is a momentarily refreshing reminder of the old stuffiness. After so many artistic deaths by politics, a death by culture provides a cautionary tale of excess on the opposite end of the curatorial spectrum.

But the curators have made a statement and a decision, and very deliberately so. The first paintings that one comes upon are some portraits by Jacques-Louis David. They are a significant choice. Modern art can be said to begin with several figures, among them Goya—not in the exhibition—Courbet, or David. David, who staged the French Revolution, put classical form in the service of revolutionary goals. The curators are reminding us that those revolutionary goals were eventually, and undramatically, absorbed by the *embourgeoisement* of nineteenth-century society. That is, when all is said and done, one of history's more benign developments. But in the gradual course of change passion became good taste. And though art is long and life short, the arbiters of good taste—the people who paid millions of dollars to have some of the world's most stubbornly unclassifiable paintings moved from one set of walls to another—live forever. LEE SIEGEL

Lee Siegel, a frequent contributor to Commonweal, *is a free-lance writer living in New York.*

SCREEN

SMUT IN YOUR EYE

SCOTT'S 'TRUE ROMANCE'

Want to feel like a fool? Go see *True Romance*. That will do the trick.

For starters, there's the fictional company you will have to keep. The hero is an Elvis-obsessed, moronic piece of white trash named Clarence Worley who, when he's not clerking in a comic-book store (where he reverently samples the product),

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

doesn't get out of his apartment much, although he always treats himself to a Kung-fu triple feature on his birthday. And, get this, his favorite chop-socky star isn't the dynamic Bruce Lee or the endearing Karate clown, Jackie Chan, but the bestial Sonny Chiba, who tears off the gonads of his opponents and holds them up to the camera for our delectation. Clarence's latest such excursion rewards him with the company of Alabama Whitman, a bubble-headed tart sent to the lad by his employer as a birthday present. Alabama is the sort of girl who thinks that having one's life controlled by a pimp isn't so bad, though, come to think of it, hers did spend some time recently stomping on the stomach of one of the other whores in his stable. A few scenes later, Alabama learns that Clarence, seeking to avenge her honor or, more likely, assuage his own jealousy, has just murdered both her pimp and another gangster. To which she can only gush, "You are so-o-o romantic."

If these characters aren't repulsive enough for you, then be warned that they are played by Christian Slater and Patricia Arquette. Both of them struck me as nonentities when I first saw them (Slater in *The Name of the Rose*, Arquette in *Ethan Frome*), but I now see that that was only because they were unfairly burdened with roles requiring intelligence and charm. Here, as violence-loving turnipheads, they attain visibility, Slater by doing a third-rate imitation of Jack Nicholson and Arquette by emulating the naive vivacity of Melanie Griffith. Their performances aren't exactly good but they meet this movie's requirements by being sufficiently animalistic.

Now I'm certainly not suggesting that characters have to be subtle or likable to be compelling. The quite similar protagonists of Terence Malick's *Badlands*, played by Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek, were even more psychotic than this current duo. But Malick managed to conduct the viewer into the dreams and aspirations of his delinquents. He made you see their self-images as well as their frightful deed and so you enjoyed bifocal vision: whenever Sheen murdered, you shuddered at the action but you were also gripped by the self-deluding fantasies that propelled him to his crimes.

In *True Romance*, the strategies of writer Quentin Tarantino and director Tony Scott are the opposite of Malick's. They don't reveal anything about their main characters that you haven't known from the start. Slater's eyebrow-arching frenzy and Arquette's baby doll gurgling are what you're stuck with for the entirety of the movie. It's true that Clarence has a couple of daydream colloquies with his idol, Elvis Presley, but in these scenes the ghostly rock star merely urges Clarence on to do what he would do anyway. And isn't Presley an inappropriate choice as pop Mephisto to Clarence? Presley's persona both as singer and actor was that of a good ol' boy, sexually potent but also honest, tender, and even socially responsible (remember "In the Ghetto?"), ready to use his fists in defense of women

WHAT ARE MONKS DOING IN THE CITY?

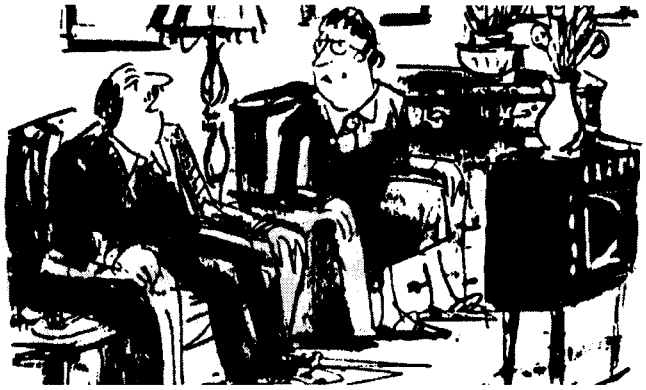
The Benedictine monks of Newark Abbey have been in the center of Newark, New Jersey, since 1854. What are we doing here?

- Living in community according to the Rule of Saint Benedict.
- Following a daily schedule that balances prayer and work.
- Ministering to God's people through Saint Benedict's Prep. School and two parishes.
- Serving as a sign of hope and Good News in our city.

COME AND SEE!

For Further Information
Write Director of Vocations
Newark Abbey
520 M.L. King Blvd.
Newark, New Jersey 07102
Phone (201) 643-4800, ext. 530

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"You're right, dear—it's in very bad taste and offensive, and I'm going to switch it off in disgust very shortly."

and children but otherwise nonviolent. Why would the spirit of this redneck Galahad urge his fan on to homicide and drug dealing?

For drug dealing is indeed the mission as Clarence and his inamorata, with a suitcase loaded with cocaine taken from the dead pimp, drive from Detroit to L.A. to sell the dope to Hollywood executives. What they don't know is that the mob is in pursuit and, later, some L.A. cops are conducting a sting. All these mobsters and detectives and Hollywood shysters are portrayed as just so many comic monsters equal to one another in greed and viciousness, and they display Tarantino's greatest writing talent: his knack for serving up comic-sinister dialogue which is not only funny but which registers the stirrings of violence as a Geiger counter detects the presence of radiation. Tarantino can't write a father-son reconciliation or a truly interesting love scene but he is a whiz at capturing the profane mockery and excitement of detectives listening on headphones to a drug deal. And he is also good at pushing the comic-sinister into sheer horror, as when an assassin admits to a victim that he used to be sickened whenever he killed but now does it just to see the expressions on his victims' faces change.

The supporting players, abetted by Tony Scott's galvanizing staging, have such a field day that they easily nudge aside the leads. There are four stand-outs. Gary Oldman astonished me as a white pimp trying with considerable success to look and sound black. The actor charges the air around him with nearly palpable menace. Saul Rubenick (the dime novelist of *Unforgiven*) is deliciously loathsome as a self-bedazzled movie producer; Christopher Walken, though patently miscast as a Sicilian mafioso, manages once again to use his cobra magnetism to elicit both laughs and chills. But best of all is Bronson Pinchot as a profoundly luckless go-between memorably named Elliot Blitzer. Pinchot endows this craven would-be actor, producer's toady, and police informant with so much humor and (relative) sanity that Blitzer becomes the single truly human presence in this cast of maniacs. Solicitude for one's own skin may not be the noblest of emotions, but when Pinchot, trapped between the ranks of mafia and police, suggests that everyone hold their fire until he slips out since "all this is really none of my business," he expresses the only emotion in this movie untainted by the malice Tarantino shows for both his characters and his audience.

For an example of that malice, take the scene in which gangsters led by Walken interrogate Clarence's father (Dennis Hopper) in order to learn our hero's whereabouts. Hopper defies his tormentors and provokes them into killing him before he breaks under torture. All very noble, but note how Tarantino taints this act of heroism. Hopper, learning that Walken is Sicilian, taunts the elegant hoodlum with the fact that Moors raided Sicily centuries ago and impregnated the women. Therefore, concludes this well-read security guard, all you Sicilians are "part nigger." Granted, the speech does have a certain nasty humor and Walken's bemused reactions to it are hilarious. I also grant Bernard Shaw's insight that people don't have their virtues and vices in neat separate packages but have them all messed together. A brave and loving father *can* be a bigot too, or at least talk like a bigot in order to inflame his enemies. What bothers me about the speech is that its sole aim is not to reveal character under pressure but merely to shock. No, not even to shock but just to give us yet another dirty little dig in the ribs.

The "true romance" of the title is similarly subverted. In this movie's world of violence and greed, we are meant to see that the lovers, at least, are pure in their passion. But why is the first sex scene preceded by Clarence reading a violent comic book to his girl? And why is a later sex bout accomplished in a phone booth while Clarence calls a pal who is sitting on the toilet. Whatever Tony Scott and Quentin Tarantino feel about true romance in the abstract, they certainly mock it in their characters.

And consider the treatment of violence. Clarence and Alabama often watch glitzy, ridiculous crime shows on TV before and after launching into some violent encounter of their own. An ironic juxtaposition? Fantasy violence vs. the sting of reality? But though the violence undergone by the lovers is considerably more graphic than what they watch, it is just as unbelievable, just as much without real consequences. Lengthily stomped by the pimp, Clarence dashes through the rest of the movie without so much as a stitch in his side. Alabama, beaten nearly into jello by an assassin, feels fine after Clarence dabs her face with Kleenex. Why these instantaneous recoveries? Comedy? No, for they aren't done with the clean exaggeration of comedy which makes us laugh. Satire? No, for satire has a moral purpose. A sort of Brechtian distancing device? No, for the violence is so lovingly savored by the camera that we can't be distanced from it a moment later by a bit of unreality.

No, there is some other underlying emotion at the core of this movie, and I'll venture a guess as to what it is.

Under the squeal of brakes and the bursts of firepower, I seemed to hear someone in the theater's darkness muttering, "It's a joke, see? Everything's a joke. Movies are a joke, and what people will settle for from the movies is a joke. And you are a joke for watching this movie." I think it was Tarantino himself I was hearing sniggering whenever viewers flinched, sneering whenever they began to be interested in what he had helped to put on the screen.

Nihilistic laughter in the dark. RICHARD ALLEVA

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When all is said and done

THE TROUBLED DREAM OF LIFE
Living with Mortality
Daniel Callahan
Simon & Schuster, $21, 272 pp.

William F. May

A fellow passenger on a Delta flight glanced at my review copy of Daniel Callahan's *The Troubled Dream of Life* and said, "Well, at least, the title is true." After having read it, I must also report that it is a beautiful book, richly suggestive and wise, beyond the capacity of this limited précis to convey. As a veteran of the classroom, I try to freshen my motive for teaching by assigning books from which I can continue to learn. Callahan's book will immediately supplant another in my course on the humanities and medicine; and I have several dozen friends, professional and personal, on whom I will personally urge this wonderfully spacious and healing meditation on the human condition.

The book puts the rampant debate about our contemporary responses to suffering and death in a new light. Conventionally, ethicists have discerned opposing moral drives behind modern, aggressive medicine and the reactive movement of active euthanasia. The modern medical establishment sees death as the supreme evil, defines the doctor as a fighter against death, and mobilizes all the technological resources of the profession in a pitched battle against disease and death. In effect, medicine attempts to remove the mark of mortality from our frame.

In reaction, supporters of active euthanasia abhor suffering, not death, as the supreme evil and thus would give up the battle against death, indeed kill, in order to spare the patient who so chooses, pain and suffering. In effect, they would solve the problem of suffering by eliminating the sufferer.

But Callahan sees a single moral obsession behind each movement. Both seek compulsively to solve the problem of human existence through control. Modern medicine springs from the larger attempt of modern science and technology to extend human control over nature—first, over the waywardness of the external environment and, more recently, over the contingencies of the human body itself. But the effort to counter disease and death ultimately reaches a limit. It cannot eliminate the ineliminable, our mortality. Further, as medicine wages its unconditional fight against death, it hugely expands another human contingency, the pain and suffering of those whom medicine has kept alive. In response to this latter state of affairs, those who advocate euthanasia would reassert human control by letting the patient design his own death and therewith bring his own pain and suffering to an end.

Callahan concedes much good in both the impulse and the results of the modern attempt to control the natural world and human life. Few of us would voluntarily give up the amenities, the abundances, and the rescues from disease and untimely death with which modern technology has favored us. Few of us, moreover, would want to impose gratuitous suffering upon ourselves or our fellows when we can, to some degree, reduce it.

But, beginning with himself, Callahan recognizes something morally unsavory about the moral ideal of absolute control—either the controlling person or the society committed to unconditional control. Callahan confesses, "in most of my life, I want and demand a great deal of control. But I came to feel—though not at first clearly to think—that perhaps I ought not to want to be that kind of person. I came to notice that, in other parts of my life, my desire for maximum control has not always served me well. It did not create a person I could invariably admire."

The ironies of the impulse to control abound. Psychoanalysts have recognized that the person who insists on controlling everyone and everything is, in fact, out of control. The society that has prided itself in dominating the external environment has succeeded in massively polluting it and

"If it hadn't been for all that damn health food, I could have been up here years ago."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

contaminating its own life. The society that urges without let or limit a battle against suffering and death, often imposes worse suffering and more turbulent deaths upon its members. Thus the medical establishment ought to aim at a good death, not at eliminating death.

At the policy level, Callahan recommends that the old question—"when is a patient dying, and thus a candidate for the abatement of lifesaving treatment?"—should yield to the more appropriate question—"at what point, or within what range, should lifesaving treatment be abated to enhance the likelihood of a good death?" This new way of putting the question will not eliminate absolutely all pain and suffering, but it will help avoid those evils that beset us when we claim the right to control our fate totally.

Like the ancient Greeks, Callahan opposes excess. Adjectives that constantly appear in the text are "excessive," "obsessive." He is skeptical of the imperial self—the self that refuses to accept limits—either those limits which mortality itself imposes upon us or the limits borne of our finite and diminishing powers and our mutual dependency. The subtitle of the book—*Living with Mortality*—nicely expresses the equilibrium we should seek. Manic aggressive medicine has sought to eliminate *mortality* and inflicted upon us longer lives and worse health, longer illnesses and slower deaths; longer aging and increased dementia. Enthusiasts for active euthanasia run up against the pain and suffering of dying and the embarrassment of depending on others, and promptly opt out of *living*. We need to cultivate those virtues that allow us to live with our mortality.

As befits a classical teleologist, Callahan chooses aesthetic images to express our proper vocation within the limits of our condition. He likens us to sculptors who must respect and honor the limits and specificity of the materials on which they work or the flower arranger who learns how to work with the materials at hand, not longing for flowers not available. Religiously put, Callahan's book can be read as an antignostic tract, against those who would use knowledge—and technology—and medicine—to distract us from coming to terms with our mortal, limited condition.

Along the way, Callahan declares, "I am not a believer," but a kind of natural piety suffuses the book, and the epistemological optimism of his Catholic heritage in natural theology governs the work. He writes with a view to recovering what, in a sense, we already partly know and to reaching a consensus even though a consensus may entail some reshaping of our national character. He also writes with an unself-conscious humility (what other kind is there?) that is eloquent. Here is a man who more than anyone helped to create and congregate the pool of experts who write as medical ethicists, but he himself writes with a tone and spirit that reminds us of the moralist in us all. As Samuel Johnson put it, "We are all moralists perpetually, geometers only by chance."

In a closing coda, the provisionally skeptical Callahan still keeps the door open, "Can death, and the life in which it is embedded, be transcended? I do not see this for myself, but I hope to live the remainder of my days in a way that at least puts me in a position to be (as Wordsworth put it) 'surprised by joy.' It is unlikely but perhaps not impossible. I wait and watch."

In this passage, Callahan perhaps too quickly associates the transcendent solely with a life that somersaults beyond death. His own closing pages on "Solidarity and Death" suggest that he already knows, but does not name, a transcendent that perdures immanently in and through the "living sacrifices that human existence as such requires." Do we not already participate here and now in the transcendent, as we live limitedly with and for others? Matthew 25 seems to suggest so in another version of surprised by joy. □

BETWEEN LAW & CHARACTER

MORAL IMAGINATION
Mark Johnson
University of Chicago, $29.95, 287 pp.

MORAL SENSE
James Q. Wilson
Free Press, $22.95, 313 pp.

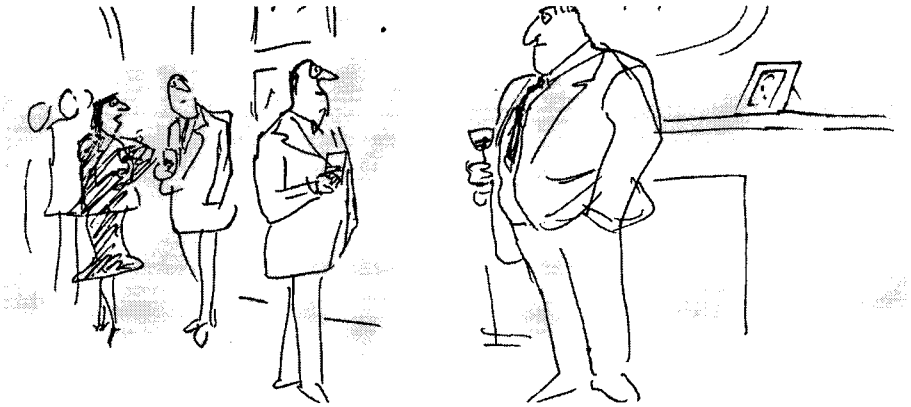
Dennis O'Brien

Whether morality is a matter of imagination or sense, it is clear for these two authors that it is not a matter of *rules*. Mark Johnson cites George Eliot: "All people of broad, strong sense have an instinctive repugnance to men of maxims; because such people early discern that the mysterious complexity of our life is not embraced by maxims." That sounds right. Where did enthusiasm for maxims arise? One might imagine the Ten Commandments and the rest of Deuteronomy were at fault, but in both authors the principal villain turns out to be the Enlightenment.

Mark Johnson's *Moral Imagination* is a sustained attack on what he calls "the Moral Law Folk Theory" which, he says, holds that moral reasoning consists in bringing concrete cases under moral rules which will then specify "the right thing to do." Not only does such a vision of morality oversimplify a deduction which in real life seems full of dilemmas, Johnson doubts that there are even any moral rules from which to start. Relying on work in cognitive science, Johnson argues that the clear-cut concepts in which the moral rules are stated are anything but. Our thinking is everywhere metaphorical so that the notion of univocal rules is defeated before it starts.

The obvious worry of such an analysis is that it is a straight road to utter moral relativism. Johnson offers various counters to a conclusion he does not wish to draw. There may not be rational objectivity, but there is what he calls "transperspectivity"—a sort of gathering of the metaphors with which we humans have told fulfilling life narratives. From this imag-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"He wouldn't kill a fly. His strength is moral."

inative exercise we can derive certain prototypes for the good life. Very much influenced by John Dewey, Johnson rejects a "quest for certainty" in favor of a continuing moral dialogue.

James Q. Wilson is one of our most noted scholars of criminal behavior. Thus it is interesting that he should consider "the other side of the coin": the moral sense of people. Perhaps because he normally deals with actions which almost any sane person would regard as morally wrong, he has no patience with sophisticated philosophers or advanced educators who opine that moral judgments are utterly relative: clarify all values but castigate none. Wilson believes that the average person has more moral sense than such theoreticians admit, and that this moral sense is "natural."

Wilson looks for the roots of morality in facts about the species that are so common that the application of "natural" seems hardly out of place. Humans are social animals raised in families. Since this is the universal experience of the race, there are certain natural dispositions for sympathy, fairness, self-control, and duty which have evolutionary survival value. Much of the text consists of fascinating sociological studies and conjectures about how social and family context select for traits which are at least "proto-moral." While it is true that the sense of sympathy may extend my consideration to an unfortunate neighbor, it may also cement me with my criminal gang. Nevertheless, without a "natural" trend toward sympathy no society, criminal or saintly, could survive.

Whether it is Johnson's advocacy for imagination and metaphor, or Wilson's emphasis on natural tendencies and social up-bringing, both authors commonly reject reason as the basis of the moral life. Rejecting rationalism is the basis of their common rejection of the Enlightenment. Johnson mounts a sustained critique of the greatest of the Enlightenment rationalists, Immanuel Kant. It is not reason that dictates us the moral law, it is imagination which extends our sense of the good life. Wilson, while admitting some of the liberating aspects of Enlightenment individualism, condemns those intellectuals who "believe in systems of thought rather than habits of life." Humanity would not persevere on rationally argued morality. "Systems collapse faster, and with greater collateral damage than habits." Carried to an extreme, intellectualist morality creates an "adversary culture" which sets itself in opposition "to the habits and preferences of the working and middle class."

I find much that is congenial in these two accounts. George Eliot (and Johnson) are correct. Life is more complex than casuists claim. Of the two treatments, I am more impressed with Wilson. Johnson's book is certainly for philosophers, not the casual reader. While the position Johnson stakes out has merit, I find his reading of the history highly tendentious. Even Kant is not as categorical as Johnson claims, and when he wants to assert that "the Moral Law Folk Theory" has been *the* moral philosophy of the West, I wonder what he makes of Aristotle who seems not to have been interested in moral *law* at all.

Johnson's disdain for Kantian moral *reason* misleads him, I believe, toward a somewhat dubious substitute of moral *imagination*. Playing imagination off against reason seems to me to accept too much of the "faculty" psychology which Johnson is at pains to reject. (If morality isn't from reason, what other "mental" apparatus will serve?) But morality may rest neither on reason nor imagination, but in habits of character. To the extent that "imagination" suggests a looser, more creative approach to moral situations, I applaud the direction of Johnson's argument. However, I think that Wilson is closer to the truth, when he seeks to surmount rules through "character."

Following Aristotle (and Wilson), ethics is a study of habits (virtues not laws). The virtuous person acquires habits of action (courage, self-control, fairness) which are applied in the confusion of actual circumstance "as a man of practical wisdom" would apply them. It is not moral "imagination" that seems crucial, it is moral experience which leads to practical wisdom. Rules fail in our moral dilemmas, so we rely on basic character, the moral personality which acts with bravery and consideration in "the mysterious complexity of our life." □

The Milton Center
a center for excellence in writing
announces
two post-graduate fellowships

Purpose: to provide an opportunity for new writers of Christian commitment to complete their first book length manuscripts within a supportive community of fellow writers and artists. Degrees not a requirement for application.

Stipend: $6,000 stipend, plus living accommodations for one at the Milton Center's host campus, Kansas Newman College in Wichita, Kansas. Married writers are invited to apply, with the understanding that the amount provided for living expenses is limited to one person.

Required: book proposal, writing samples, recommendations

Deadline: January 15, 1994

Awards announced: April 19, 1994

Applications and further information available from:

The Milton Center
Kansas Newman College
3100 McCormick Avenue
Wichita, Kansas 67213

Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

This program is supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GRACEFUL POLEMIC

MEDICINE AT THE CROSSROADS
The Crisis in Health Care
Melvin Konner, M.D.
Pantheon, $23, 298 pp.

Madeline Marget

Medicine at the Crossroads, a companion to the PBS series, is a thoughtful survey of health-care problems and possible solutions. The book's greatest strength is Melvin Konner's clear presentation of simultaneous realities. He honors both scientific achievement and spiritual life, and sees social progress—especially if it learns from and includes tradition—as the basis for the prevention and cure of suffering.

Konner is a physician, an anthropologist, and a writer. He's a good instructor, who smoothly leads the reader through chapters covering doctor-patient relationships, the history of medicine and its current practice, drug research and use, genetic research, surgery's rights and wrongs, psychiatric treatment and social life, ways of helping the aged and dying, and the AIDS epidemic. Each chapter includes convincing personal stories and explanatory information, and negative and positive examples. The stories are always lively—this is a highly readable book—and usually enlightening.

For instance, in "The Magic Bullet," the chapter on pharmaceutical remedies, Konner writes about the impact of a newly engineered drug called mifepristone on James Nelson, a man suffering from Cushing's syndrome. Once Nelson became ill, says Konner, "by his own testimony and that of his wife—his life had become practically unlivable, their marriage little more than shared anguish." After receiving treatment developed by a drug company scientist, "'His life was like a complete turnaround—it was like a miracle. To go from one side of life and then to see the other, it was actually beautiful,'" Mrs. Nelson said. Konner shares the Nelsons' enthusiasm, but he also discusses the tragic consequences of pharmaceutical disasters like DES, and the questionable wisdom of investing in limited successes, such as AZT in the treatment of AIDS.

Often, doctors don't know exactly what to do. Konner says so, and the uncertainty and complexity of medical and social decision making are well presented. Though forthright in criticism of antigay bigotry, Konner also points out that other, far more widespread health problems, such as maternal deaths in childbirth and heart disease, get much less attention and financial support than AIDS does. *Medicine at the Crossroads* is particularly strong when it shows that there isn't one simple way of looking at illness and treatment. The cures scientific medicine has effected are sometimes wonderful, but sometimes ephemeral, sometimes false. Konner explains the more rigorous kinds of evaluation, such as controlled testing and outcome studies, that should be applied more widely than they are to both medical treatment and surgical procedures.

Konner's description of mental illness and its treatment is particularly good, especially his discussion of the wonders of antipsychotic drugs and the failure of deinstitutionalization. While stressing the critical usefulness of scientific knowledge, Konner emphasizes two other central components of cure: supportive communities, and the spiritual life. Tormented people need empathy and acceptance. Konner, however, does not seem to have adequately examined his proposed solutions. For example: "Where are the chaplains?" he asks, speaking of their absence, in his experience, in psychiatric hospitals. Having heard more than one psychiatrist ridicule and dismiss religious belief, I suspect that it isn't the chaplains' choice to be absent from the psychiatric floors of secular institutions, but Konner doesn't hint at this possibility. Nevertheless, his plea to involve people concerned with spiritual life in the treatment of diseases of the spirit is worthy.

Some of Konner's suggestions are less convincing. He describes Sun City, Arizona, a retirement community where old people, self-isolated from other generations, are neglected when their diseases are treatable, and tortured with end-of-life measures that turn out to be futile. He then contrasts Sun City to Clifden, "a beautiful old seaside town in the rolling Connemara countryside of County Galway," with its aging population constantly monitored by a kindly GP, a knowledgeable nurse, an attentive home health-care worker, and committed family members. This juxtaposition seems exaggerated, a mere contrasting of extremes in order to make a preconceived point. Similarly, an Italian town is presented as a model of compassion and acceptance of the mentally ill, and Banaras, India, as a place where both doctors and family do all they can and then know when to quit with dying people. But these vignettes seem incomplete and romantic.

The flaws of *Medicine at the Crossroads* are also its virtues. The book's attempts at breadth and conciseness lead to occasional omissions of relevant medical or social facts. Part of this is the result of limited space, but Konner compounds the problem by overgeneralizing. He is deeply distressed at the suffering he rightly wants society to alleviate, and temperate in criticizing various methods of treatment. However, this urgency leads to the great-

REVIEWERS

WILLIAM F. MAY *is Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., professor of Christian Ethics at Georgetown University's Kennedy Institute of Ethics.*

DENNIS O'BRIEN *is president of the University of Rochester. He is the author of* God and the New Haven Railway *(Beacon).*

MADELINE MARGET, *a regular* Commonweal *contributor, is the author of* Life's Blood *(Simon & Schuster).*

DAVID CASTRONOVO *is author of a critical biography of Edmund Wilson (Ungar, 1985) and other books of cultural criticism. He is professor of English at Pace University.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

est problem I found in the book. Konner's strong feeling and conviction about how to solve the health-care crisis sometimes translate into a judgmental flailing of the reader. In the Epilogue he lambastes an "us" for being infantile and unrealistic in our demands; irresponsible in accepting what we, not doctors and the government, must do. This mystified and antagonized me. Many of "us" are more than willing to be well-informed about health and illness, and to cooperate in our care, and we believe ourselves to be the government.

Still, *Medicine at the Crossroads* is jampacked with interesting information and insight. It's a graceful polemic, a stimulant, and a contribution to the general medical education everyone needs in order to become the good health-care providers, policy makers, and consumers Melvin Konner says we must be. □

A SINGULAR AMERICAN

THE SIXTIES
The Last Journal, 1960-72
Edmund Wilson
Edited, with an introduction and notes, by Lewis M. Dabney
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $35, 968 pp.

David Castronovo

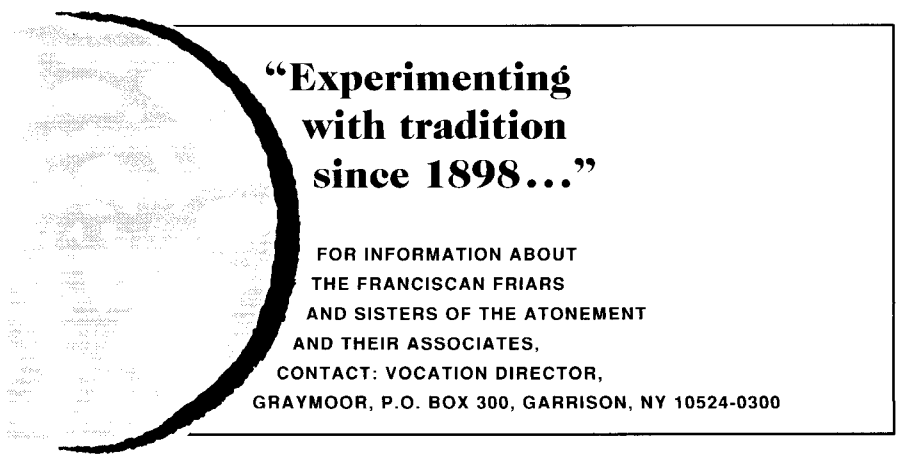
These journals, skillfully edited by Lewis Dabney of the University of Wyoming, are the last stand of one of America's greatest literary critics and cultural observers. A rugged "literary worker" who set up shop in the 1920s as a book reviewer, arts critic, and political journalist, Wilson built a career that lasted—with hardly a pause for illness or old age—until his death in 1972. Not even death could seal off Wilson's pipeline of cultural reports: we still keep hearing from him every few years as journals, letters, and other posthumous works appear.

With a bluff disregard for the trendy and the fashionable, Wilson spent half a century telling intelligent general readers what he thought about leftist politics, psychoanalysis in literary criticism, the Ziegfeld Follies, California writers, the tyranny of the IRS—and just about every artistic tendency and political pressure that had an influence on the lives of his fellow citizens. He also explored a daunting array of broader concerns—the origins of revolution in *To the Finland Station*, the idea of Jewish righteousness in *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, the power drive in *Patriotic Gore*, and the development of literary symbolism in *Axel's Castle*. In his last years he exhaustively recorded his private life and impressions: his mammoth journals move from an upper-middle-class boy's innocence in pre-World War I Hill School and Princeton to perhaps the fullest account in American letters of an intellectual's experience of modernity. For him writing was a civic duty to be fulfilled with clarity, candor, and thoroughness.

The Sixties is a good introduction to Wilson's unique way of balancing intellectual elitism and populist outreach. Wilson certainly does not come across as a haughty mandarin or a remote academic: in search of a "truly human culture," he wanted to be his sovereign literary self while at the same time making points about the suffering of the Iroquois in New York State, the absurdities of the Pentagon, and the power mania of bureaucrats. He always sought the opinions of ordinary workers and unglamorous locals. He cultivated many friends at his family retreat at Talcottville, New York; here he was far enough away from literary Manhattan and chic Wellfleet, his more official summer residence, to allow him to escape the exclusivism of the intelligentsia.

The modern intellectual's desire to connect ideas with the sometimes imperceptible events of family, neighborhood, and nation is Wilson's master theme. He hated expensive vacation resorts like Naples, Florida, and Jamaica; of the latter he mused, "Peculiar footlessness of ideas that pass through my head—importance of being somewhere where people are doing something." With a holy horror of idleness and a fear inherited from his brilliant lawyer father about "weltering around in a Dead Sea of mediocrity," Wilson champions the yoking of the elitist's ambition and the socialist's dream of fulfilling labor. *The Sixties* should be required reading for politicians who talk endlessly about work and social stability. John and Robert Kennedy both admired Wilson: the latter read *Europe without Baedeker* on line at a polling place; the former gave him the Medal of Freedom.

But Wilson has found precious few of these public figures to read his books. Your local chain bookstore will probably follow its computer and regard Wilson as a frill for highbrows rather than our twentieth-century Emerson. And the reading public today wants the autobiographer to cut to the chase, provide the juice upfront, and edit out the undramatic. These are accommodations that Wilson never pro-


"Experimenting with tradition since 1898..."
FOR INFORMATION ABOUT
THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS
AND SISTERS OF THE ATONEMENT
AND THEIR ASSOCIATES,
CONTACT: VOCATION DIRECTOR,
GRAYMOOR, P.O. BOX 300, GARRISON, NY 10524-0300

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vides for his readers. Elaine May, Mary McCarthy, Jackie O., and W.H. Auden make vivid appearances in *The Sixties*, but Wilson balances them with hundreds of small discourses on Diderot, Balzac's melodrama, Hungarian translations of Shelley and Poe, Hebrew scholarship—in short the business of the heroic humanist.

Besides his commitment to evaluating classics and his insistence on his own pacing and nineteenth-century copiousness of notation, there is the problem of a cultural critic who judges without diplomacy or much qualification. Fortifying himself with middle-of-the-night-readings from Macaulay's *History of England* and drinking like a man of the 1920s ("Scotch" must be one of the most frequently used words in the book), he harrumphs his way through the culture of the 1960s and what remains of his older modernist world. With a certain bad grace—combined with the old radical's impatience with ignorant nonconformists—he opens fire on "louts," "beatniks" (in the sixties?), whining young people with their vague criticisms of the system, literary "slobs" (I'll supply no names). The nasty edge—partly 1920s' iconoclasm, partly irascibility—is everywhere. At times it does some good. The *Partisan Review* "boys" are impervious to delight and have none of the verve of connoisseurs in their criticism of literature; the crowd on *la plage des intellectuels* at Wellfleet dare not express certain opinions because they work for universities and other large institutions. One can also see what Wilson means when he finds Buñuel's film *La Belle de Jour* pornographic and Antonioni's *Blow-up* "empty."

But Wilson's coldness—in discussing sex and in evaluating people—makes him, at his worst, rather reductive. Lovemaking seems like so many zoological transactions; and although this creepy presentation is sometimes mitigated by episodes of tenderness and old-fashioned gallantry, it never goes away. Nor does the tendency to throw the weakness of important writers into high relief: Malraux's elusiveness about power politics and morality makes him a double-talker at the JFK White House; Robert Frost's rustic "act" about the neglect of the poet in America makes him an old bore; Isaiah Berlin's overflowing excitement about ideas makes him a conversation grabber.

But just when you are about to lose patience with these high-horse pronouncements, you come face-to-face with Wilson's devotion to his mission and his standards. He is saddened by the fact that his old friend Waldo Frank "had no humility before his medium, never in fact taught himself to write." But Wilson does not need to agree with you to see what you have built in a life of writing or action. Anais Nin is treated kindly because of her insight and fortitude; she is forgiven for portraying Wilson as a patriarchical bully in her journals. Wilson the honest atheist also takes courage from the dying John XXIII and his tireless efforts to reform the Catholic church.

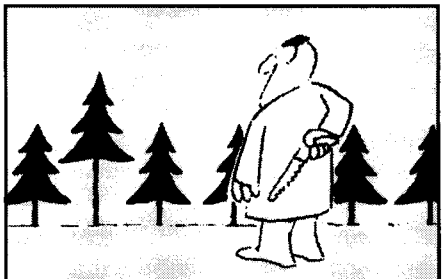
At a dinner party in 1963, Wilson had been thundering about the American Empire and threatening to go to Switzerland. Adolf Berle, a former assistant secretary of state, began badgering him about not being a good American. Paraphrasing his wife Elena's comment on the scene, Wilson writes, "there'd be America anywhere where I was." With his battered panama hat and his insatiable curiosity, he was a modern emblem of American individualism. □

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

Yeats," described these columns as Auden's attempt to formulate a Christian theory of literature; the essay also commented, in passing, on the significance of the pseudonym. This material was subsequently incorporated into the study, *Auden: A Carnival of Intellect* (Oxford University Press, 1983), which has some additional references to "Lecture Notes." Auden himself used passages from the "Notes" in later essays, whose titles reflect the doubleness of Didymus, such as "Hic et Ille" and "The Well of Narcissus," subsequently collected in *The Dyer's Hand.*

I hope Jack Deedy's *Auden as Didymus* succeeds in bringing Auden's *Commonweal* columns to a wider audience—possibly as a topic for a symposium in your pages. EDWARD CALLAN



Christmas is coming...

Send *COMMONWEAL* to:

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

With notification, as a gift, from:

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

One Year, $39 Two Years, $67

Canadian postage: $2 a year, Foreign, $5

COMMONWEAL

15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038

10/22/93

CLASSIFIED

RATES: 80¢ a word, one time; 76¢ three times; 72¢ six times; Classified payable with order; monthly in advance for more than three times. COMMONWEAL, 15 Dutch St., NYC 10038.

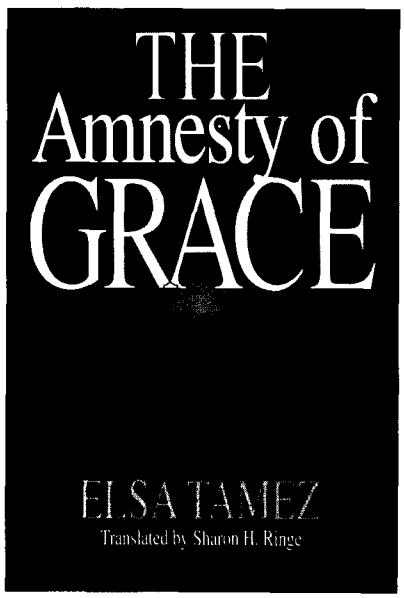
Position Opening

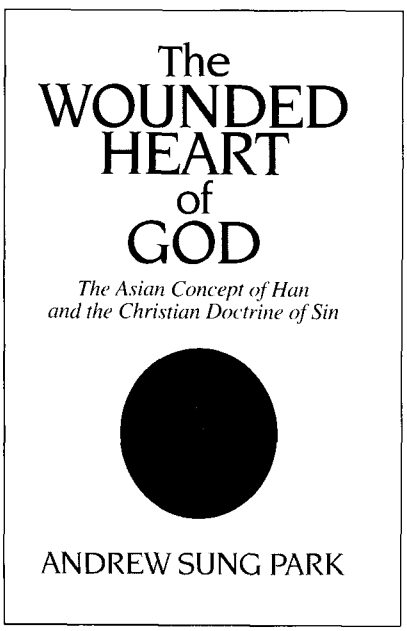
The Jesuit Volunteer Corps: Midwest seeks an executive director to begin in February, 1994 (negotiable). Qualifications: Desire to integrate faith and justice, commitment to the poor, skilled administrator, fundraiser. Three-to-five year commitment, salary $28,000-30,000. Send resumé by November 15th: Search Committee P.O. Box 139, Clarkston, MI 48347-0139.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

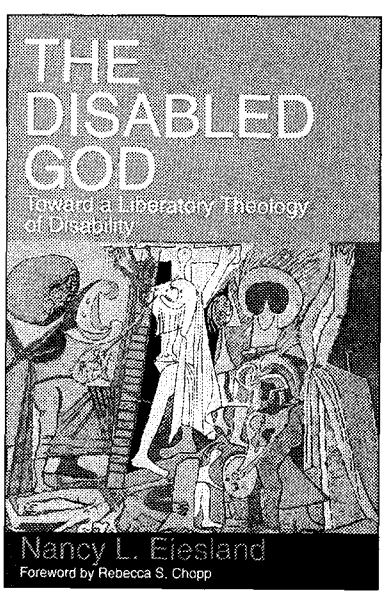
LANDMARKS IN THEOLOGY

Elsa Tamez proposes a radical reinterpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith. "***The Amnesty of Grace*** is a landmark book which shows that Latin American Liberation Theology has reached its maturity."
—Justo L. González, Columbia Theological Seminary.
ISBN 0-687-00934-0
$14.95, paper

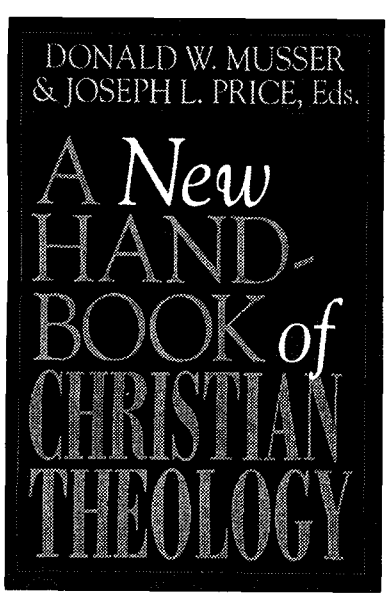




In ***The Wounded Heart of God***, Andrew Sung Park looks beyond the doctrines of sin and salvation, which focus on the moral agency of the sinner, to the pervasive reality of suffering victims. "Well-conceived and amply documented, this study is an important advance in theological reflection."
—Robert McAfee Brown,
Pacific School of Religion
ISBN 0-687-38536-9
$16.95, paper



"Nancy Eiesland has written an accessible theology, giving persons with disabilities access to the symbolic world of theology, giving the church access to the experience of persons with disabilities, and giving all of us access to the joy of extraordinarily well-written practical theology."
—Pamela D. Couture,
Candler School of Theology
ISBN 0-687-10801-2
$13.95, paper



A New Handbook of Christian Theology is "an indispensible resource for all students of theology from beginners to professors."
—Rosemary R. Ruether,
Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
ISBN 0-687-27802-3
$19.95, paper

Abingdon Press

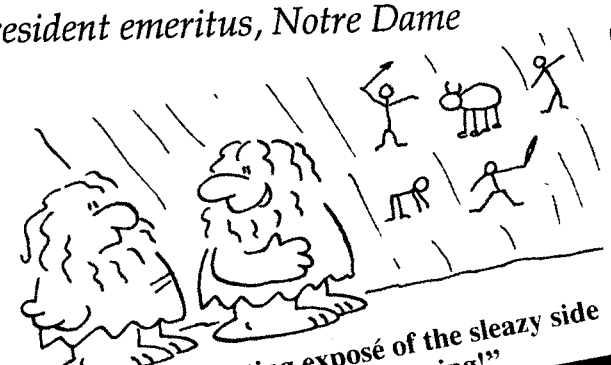
VISIT YOUR LOCAL BOOKSTORE
CALL TOLL FREE: 1-800-672-1789
OR FAX: 1-800-445-8189
• • •
Satisfaction Guaranteed!
Prices subject to change without notice. Transportation extra.

OA-0074-4

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHAT IS COMMONWEAL?

"COMMONWEAL is loyal to its Catholic tradition—and free to question it, keep it alive, put it to work on current questions. That makes it a uniquely useful resource for anyone concerned about ethics in the public sphere."
Theodore M. Hesburgh, *C.S.C., president emeritus, Notre Dame*



"It's a hard-hitting exposé of the sleazy side of hunting and gathering!"

"I value COMMONWEAL, oddly perhaps, for what it is not. It is not parochial, or sentimental, or (ever) cowardly. It never bullies or hectors. It is neither blindly submissive nor fashionably rebellious. Of course, I often disagree—but never because of a maddening lack of logic. COMMONWEAL is as lucid and intelligent as a magazine can be. It tests me, unknots my thoughts; it refreshes me."
Barbara Grizzuti-Harrison, *novelist*

An independent review of public affairs, religion, literature, and the arts

It's a biweekly magazine, usually 32 pages. Handsome design. Not many photos, lots of line art, some of it funny. Is edited by lay Catholics, has been since 1924. Independent. On occasion, sassy. Liberal? Of course. Conservative? Ditto.

GIVE US A TRY

COMMONWEAL

15 DUTCH STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10038

TRIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER: 11 Issues for $12.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

☐ I prefer a full year's subscription at $39. 10/22/93

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED